BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure for MEN, by MEN ★ NOVEMBER ★ 25 Cents

THESE UNITED STATES... XI—Tennessee
Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

MY SISTER, GOODNIGHT
A Complete Book-Length Mystery Novel
by GORDON McDONELL

THE PASSING OF THE SPHINX EMERALD
A Novelette *by H. BEDFORD-JONES*

Many short stories, fact articles and special features

THESE UNITED STATES . . . . XI — TENNESSEE

A Country for All the World

THE three of us took to that frontier existence—John Sevier, Dan'l Boone and I—because we liked it and its freedom. I had my gifts, and so did the others. John was gifted with imagination, and at times had a sort of second sight; he was as good a woodsman as Boone, but had a clearer head. I remember him saying once to me: "Look at that river, Robertson—think of it a century from now, with people living in those fields, with big towns where we now see only deer-licks!"

In those early years John Sevier had great respect from all, and he was a wonderful man. The settlers worshiped him. I think he did have a real vision of the future. He was always a leader in forays, always ready to take the warpath. He was a born Indian-fighter and hated them bitterly. Wasters, he called them—wasting game and fertile ground where farms might lie.

He had a glimpse of things that we never dreamed, and he tried to pass the glimpse on to others. Time and again I have heard him say to settlers: "Here is the ideal spot. Take up this land, cut out the trees, and your children will have riches, both in farms and in a future. Some day this will be a country of whites, not of Indians."

Sevier was a splendid organizer, a colonel of militia in Lord Dunmore's War, but he thought little of a soldier's life; he believed in a far trail, independent action, and no wasted bullets. "Give me moccasins and a Pennsylvania rifle," said he, "and I'll guarantee to beat off a full company of soldiers any day by myself." This was no big talk, either.

John had an iron frame, and could outdo any man except Boone, who was a skilled woodsman, but was careless and had no great liking for civilization—he took scant thought of the morrow, and thought John a bit cracked for talking so much about it; according to him, the farther off the towns stayed, the less spoiled the land would be. Because Dan'l was so careless about land titles, he lost all the land he took up.

Sevier had land of his own on the Watauga River and had killed many a redskin to get it. Especially after wiping out the British army at King's Mountain with his long rifles, he was the hero of all the frontier. In his later years he got to playing politics and made many a mistake—remember the new State he set out to organize, and how he was going to name it "Franklin"? They tried him for treason on account of that, but couldn't make it stick; politics has been the ruin of so many fine men! Even so, the settlers still swore by him. And he was the first elected Governor of Tennessee. And most often, remember, it takes a strong man to make mistakes and have opinions of his own.

One of his opinions made many a man laugh at him behind his back. During the troubles while the nation was getting started and framing the Constitution, John used to say openly that the country had been founded upon Providential help and for definite reasons; harm it might have, yes; but with so elect a founding it must ever be, as he said, "a country for all the world, and safe from destruction even by fools." To my mind, that was nothing to laugh about. He was a great man, was John Sevier, and I am proud of having known him.

Readers' Comment

I'M not too fond of the rôle of critic but in this instance I must step up and take my swing. BLUE BOOK you've just committed fraud, misrepresentation; I wonder if mayhem couldn't be made to stick. I refer to the story of the "Lost Battalion of Mortain" in your September issue. Is C. Donald Wire subsidized by the Air Force or the artillery? He adds glamour to an already glamour-laden arm—the Air Force, but what about those dirty stinking doughs on the ground? They were doughfooted Infantrymen, you know, not artillery as he claims, a battalion of the 30th Division. The war in Normandy wasn't just a month old either, it was two months and one day old on August 7, 1944, when the flight occurred.

How do I know this? I was probably the dirtiest, stinkingest scarediest, one of those doughs on that hill. My outfit, the 36th Armored Infantry of the 3rd Armored Division, was at Mortain too.

How about a correction and an apology to the Queen Of Battles, the Infantry?

Forrest W. Shugart

P.S. I still like you. Even the Infantry made mistakes; ask some of the fly boys in the P-51s who acquired .30-cal. holes in those square-tipped wings. Shouldn't have looked so much like Focke Wulfe 190's.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We are glad to print the the above letter, because it points out the reason for the apparent neglect of the Ground Forces in our war articles, of which it complains—namely: the various units of the Ground Forces were so closely integrated and they were so interdependent one upon the other, that an attempt to present an adequate story about any particular unit develops into a history of an entire army and an entire campaign. A Naval action, on the other hand, or an Air mission, is to an extent a separable operation, and can be described by itself. It is for this reason, and not because of any partiality, that we have given more space to the Air Force and the Navy.*

Getting back to Mr. Shugart's letter: It was the 230th Field Artillery Battalion to which Mr. Wire's article referred. A lot of other outfits were in the Mortain action, however, for as Mr. Wire said in his article: "Mortain itself was a little French village lying in the path of the enemy attack. A dozen times it had been taken, lost, and retaken by the Allies."

We have recently obtained some material which enables us to give at least a sample of the tough action the Ground Forces went through—a history of the 517th Airborne Regiment, written by its commander, Colonel Rupert Graves. For the 517th was a separate regiment, not permanently attached to any division, but a combat team put into action where it was most needed. This, as well as a personal experience of close combat in Germany from a private's viewpoint, by Robert Bliss, will appear in early issues.

BLUE BOOK

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DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

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SPOOK-BOX

Gerry could see Dicky, wild-eyed and frantically reaching for

THERE were two silver bars on his shoulder; and if you looked closely, you could see where he had once worn an oak leaf. Gerry Breen was glad to be back in the Army, but it was nothing like it had been before. Nothing was the same, except perhaps the ribbons under his wings; and he was beginning to wonder about them. Twenty-four years of age, and he felt old! Not tired. None of the physical weariness that creeps in with the years. More like the futile plodding of a stranger in a strange world.

He felt passers-by resented his being in uniform. He wondered if he should have left the ribbons off. He wondered if he should have come at all. He *knew* they were wondering why he hadn't been separated or discharged. It was crazy, but the words seemed obsolete now. Gerry Breen couldn't cope with any of it.

He couldn't cope with P-80 jet fighters. He couldn't cope with the post-war world. He was adrift in a civvy sea that had never been charted. Upstairs, you can get a fix. You can tune in a friendly beam. You can even ask for directions—and get them. That is, you could in a Thunderbolt. What happens when you tie up with a jet fighter is something else. They bewilder you with goofy terms like *mach* marks, compressibility and tail-pipe temperatures.

It was the same with this post-war gal. Gerry couldn't figure her from any angle. Right from the start it wasn't the same. In the first place, she turned up on time! Right on the dot! Not under the clock at the Astor or at the Information Booth at Grand Central. No, she had to pick a book-shop near 48th and Fifth. That should have tipped Gerry off.

Right from the start it was all fouled up. Fifteen minutes after they met, Delphine was in full charge. But Delphine was acting under orders. *"Find out what bothers him,"* Whit had requested. . . .

In the old days Gerry had these missions mapped out like a fighter sweep. A pocketful of dice-table dough, three bars of chocolate from the PX, and he was serviced and available. It did not have to be New York; it could be London, Cambridge or even Paris. In those days Gerry could anticipate their every move and take evasive action. Their program ran through bun-struggles in the tea-shops, bicycle rides along the canal bank, the music from a park bandstand, the Garrison Repertory Company show or the Officers' Club in Norwich; but it always wound up according to plan—Gerry's plan. Forty-eight hours of fun and frolic; and after that he went back, climbed in a Thunderbolt and picked up where he'd left off.

But after this he'd have to go back to a jet fighter, and fume through another series of air-starts, another session with a mysterious I-16 switch, and worry about his aileron-boost going out.

He was puzzling over some old sporting prints in the window when she came up, pinched his elbow and said: "Hello, Gerry. I'm Delphine. It's nice to meet you."

Gerry took a look, and his initial plans wallowed into neutral. She was pretty, too—for a blind date. Pretty? She was breath-taking. The right height, for one thing. And she knew

PILOT

Gerry thought he knew how to handle planes and girls; but he found a jet job and Delphine definitely different.

by ARCH WHITEHOUSE

the canopy latch as though he expected to take to the silk.

how to walk. A smart suit she knew how to wear, and a hat she knew how to put on. Tawny hair that looked as though it belonged to her. A hair-do requiring but a pat and a shake, and a guy named Henri takes all the credit. All her own eyebrows framing iris-blue eyes. Give it a faint touch of syringa blossoms, and you have Delphine Driscoll.

The others always lacked something, but you couldn't be too choosy in those days. You accepted austerity clothes and sturdy brogue shoes, if they knew how to pop on a beret and relax. But this gal left you breathless right from the start—just like flying a jet.

This chick meets Gerry at a bookshop and she really perks right from the start. Already she was taking over the formation.

"I was thinking of somewhere quiet where we could talk," she was saying, her eyes smiling. That was her response to his suggestion that they have dinner at the Albatross Club and go on from there to some good musical.

Delphine smiled, but she was shaking her head. She intended to find out what bothered him. Those were Whit's specific orders.

"Not the Albatross Club tonight, Gerry."

"But everyone goes there," he insisted.

"I know. All your old Air Force crowd," she agreed. "Dozens of them, all punching shoulders, slapping backs and demanding to know where you've been since D-Day. It's interrogation in High-C."

Well, here it was. The others had all been as docile as his old Thunderbolt. He knew all their leads and their answers, and had his own counter-moves. Just like in the old Jug. You set a trim-tab, adjust a throttle, and you let it go at that. It was a matter of experience. You get in a few dozen hours, and the rest is automatic. In a properly run war everything seems to fit in its place and produce its accepted results.

BUT here in the doorway of a Fifth Avenue bookshop he was giving it the old pump-handle routine. Like a guy taking a jet fighter off for the first time. This date was taking over as if he'd never headed an element.

"I know what you mean," Gerry said, subdued. "Well, you name it."

She led him to Ricco's, where the menu is small but the portions are of noble lineage. It's a rambling warren built in the form of a maze, and when you turn a corner, there's always a more enticing spot to sit. Ricco greets you, supervises the servings; and when he gets a minute, he goes to the piano, stacks his chins in his collar, and a quiet miracle happens. It's music, but music you've never heard before.

When things quiet down at the hat-check counter, Loti deserts her disks and goes and sits on the stairs beside the piano. Ricco looks up as though he had never seen her before, and fingers a new chord or two. Then Loti sings with the haunting simplicity of a child. Gerry sat listening, wondering why man had invented juke-boxes.

"Like it?" asked Delphine when they were sipping their *potage au vermicelle*. She doused the cigarette, smudging her view of him.

"It's wonderful!" breathed Gerry. "Different. . . . I mean— What's the word for it?"

Gerry suspected she was playing his game now, and he wasn't going to be trapped again.

"There isn't any," Delphine said. "I think people come here instead of going to church. It gives them warm contentment. I always leave with a new feeling of righteous importance."

Gerry studied her sidewise. He had no response for a line like that. He stared, while the low light brought out bleak shadows under his eyes.

"What's the matter?" she asked, buttering a bread-stick.

"Nothing. It's just me, I guess." He tried to laugh but it turned into a growl. "I suppose Whit told you I was having some trouble."

Whit was Major Whitman, the Flight Surgeon at the air base in Maine where Gerry was posted with a jet fighter group. It was Whit who had suggested this meeting with his cousin Delphine. Whit had night-lettered her:

WE NEED THIS LAD. HE HAS A TERRIFIC RECORD, BUT WE'RE HAVING THE DEVIL'S OWN TIME BRINGING HIM BACK. WE CAN'T BUILD AN AIR FORCE ON POSTERS ANY MORE, AND TRADITION IS TRICKLING AWAY FAST. WE HAVE TO SHOW THE NEW KIDS SOMETHING SOLID, SOMETHING LIKE GERRY. HE'S MISSING SOMETHING, A MAGIC WORD OF SOME KIND. FIND OUT WHAT BOTHERS HIM, BUT DON'T LET HIM TAKE CHARGE OF THE EXPEDITION. HE NEEDS A NEW APPROACH, DELLY.

That's all she had to work on, so she asked: "Why did you go back in?"

He shrugged his broad shoulders and ran his fingers through his unruly hair. "I gave civilian life a whirl," he began. "I'd been a fighter pilot, and there's no future in that. Once you check in, and the Rotary Club gives you a dinner, you've had it. A regular G.I. can come home, take up hauling bundles for the super-market, and he has few regrets. I wanted to keep flying, but air lines are stiff with punks with four-engine experience."

"You could have gone to college," she said, deciding his eyes were brown, not dark green.

"I thought of that, but four years grubbing along on a Bill of Rights allowance took more courage than I had. I tried instructing on a private field, but there weren't enough pupils. I wound up driving an oil-truck, and eating my head off in dog-wagons."

"No one else in your young life?" she asked quietly.

"No! No one wanted to play any more. From what I can see, you blow your roll on a hitching that rates a two-column cut in the local journal, cash your war bonds for a week-end honeymoon, and after that it's a rat-race trying to find a place to toss your bed-roll."

"You make it sound ominous," Delphine smiled.

"Isn't it?"

"I wouldn't know."

"Take a look outside, and you'll see dozens of guys who could be me. They're still wearing their pinks and trench-coats. They're not shooting six-sixty for an orchestra seat. They're haunting the radio studios where they can sit down for nothing—and perhaps win a refrigerator."

"Well," she snapped, "you're back. You're drawing flying pay, and you can still spend six-sixty for a theater ticket. You have most of your rank back, and you're flying the most important ship in the service."

"Yeh," he sighed. "But you don't know the half of it, baby."

While they waited for Ricco to serve the broiled kidneys, Gerry tried to blot out the memory of the day before.

AT first Gerry figured it was having to fly wing-man to a guy he hardly knew. For three weeks of this jet job indoctrination, he'd tried to analyze what he was doing wrong. A guy with 28½ enemy planes to his credit ought to handle a conversion assignment better.

He watched Major Tyce lead the three-ship flight through the elementary formation exercises, and fumbled to keep his position. Tyce had given the signal for a tight 180-degree turn. Here he was tagging on to the wing-tip of some jerk who had never pooped off at an enemy fighter.

Gerry was tense against his straps. His hand was cramped from gripping the control so hard. It was nothing like flying the old Thunderbolt in pre-Normandy days. His fist cupped the throttle knob like some stupe just starting easy eights. Now if this had been his tough old Thunderbolt—

Tyce ironed in a sweet turn and Dicky Lee hugging his starboard wing might have been towed along on a cable, so beautifully did he follow. Gerry sucked in his breath, goosed her brutally and slobbered into Tyce's backwash. His jet floundered like a dory in the breakers, and Gerry's wing-tip almost knifed into Dicky's tail-assembly.

He could see Dicky, wild-eyed and frantically reaching for the canopy latch as though he expected to take to the silk. The voice of Tyce came over the head-phones, screaming at him to maintain position. Gerry fought her, kicking rudder and pumping the throttle until he floundered back into position.

"All right," Tyce said over the radio. "That's *enough* for one day. That's plenty! We'll break off and single in."

"Sorry, Dicky," said Gerry. "Guess I got careless on that turn."

"I'll say you did—when I get my breath," Dicky replied.

The three jets went into line astern and headed back for the field. Below, the Maine woods lay like a great covering of needlepoint. The lakes twinkled, and the mountain streams danced through the emerald green, looking for all the world like silver necklaces tossed across a velvet drapery. Below was peace and the vernal lure of vacationland, just as the travel folders described it.

Gerry wished he were back doing a zero altitude sweep over St. Lo, forking 50-caliber stuff into enemy transport.

But that was more than two years ago. That was when he was Major Breen, skipper of a Thunderbolt outfit booking anything up to five missions a day. Brother! Those were the days!

Then a guy knew how far he could go and what he was going on. He knew what he was doing, what he was flying and what he had under the hood. It all added up in gallons of gas and quarts of oil. You figured in terms of manifold pressure and the functioning of a set of spark-plugs. If you jazzed the throttle, you got a response in terms of audible decibels, and you didn't have to check with the air-speed needle.

Sure, you only did 400-plus if you poured everything you had into her, but that was plenty in those days. Sure, they shot at you, and made you take evasive action, but that was fun! It was, compared to any of this. Sure, the prop might stop; but if it did, you knew why, and there was an answer for it. You could compute your fuel consumption, and you knew when and why she was running hot.

This jet crate offered none of those comforts. You climb in, snap a switch, and something incomprehensible begins hissing down inside. If you give it more throttle, it simply hisses more, and all you know is what you read on the instrument panel. No surge of roaring power. No blast of prop-wash. No refining of the silver sheen where the blades are slicing the air. Straddling this turbulent tube, you get nothing but a hissing snarl producing something the power of which can be computed only by Einstein.

THEY have a name for it now: they call it the Spook Box—for you hear sounds inside and all around you that could never be heard before. Booster pumps go on and off, clanking and grinding. Mechanism, that had been drowned out by the roaring power plant up front, chatters, and you'd swear it's taunting you in some toothy language. Ice-cubes rattle in a mysterious tray, and someone scratches a hunk of slate up and down a tin washboard. The rubbery door of a cold icebox slams, and you know you're going nuts. But that's what you hear in a jet fighter.

Same way, once you get her into the air. Give her the gun, and the hiss reaches a point where you can't hear it at all. Just like one of those high-pitched dog-whistles.

Sure, she gives you 600-plus, but you get no exhilaration. There's no authoritative thrust and no intensified roar when you shoot the juice to her. Juice? You're not even sure what you are burning. They tell you she'll run on bacon fat or Crisco if you want to goof around.

She doesn't even smell the same. Just like an old oil-burner on the back porch of a summer cottage. None of the sharp tang of high octane one is accustomed to. Not to Gerry, anyway. Gerry had teethed on an old Henderson motorcycle, and he knew what made the valves click and what came out of the exhaust. He knew how to soup her up with a racing head and oversize piston rings; but what could you do with a jet engine that just hissed and got hotter; and the hotter she got, the more efficient she became?

Nothing in this set-up made any sense to Gerry.

Gerry couldn't find the word to express any of it. He couldn't explain what it felt like to fly one. He didn't know what to do to master this puzzling contrivance. Now, if he only had his old Thunderbolt—

He came to and found himself studying the girl again, taking in all the details: Fingernails just the right color. A quick flip with her fingertips, and

Illustrated by Wilson Thomson

"Lots of the old war pilots found the jets too hot for them."

her hair was set for parade again. No lipstick maneuver—just a dab with her napkin, and she was ready.

"Well,"—he grinned appreciatively, —"what musical can we see for six-sixty?"

"Don't let him take charge of the expedition," Whit had warned.

"What about the Garden?" she said with a twinkle in her eye.

"You mean Madison Square Garden?" he beamed. "What's on?"

"Who cares? Let's take a chance!"

Gerry objected to being taken completely in tow. So far, she was in the tower, but somehow the situation was challenging, and the new pace held distinct promise. A guy could learn something this way. The program was different, and he was warming up a nice batch of respect for this girl who so far had substituted Ricco's for the Albatross Club, and was now gambling on Madison Square Garden in preference to the Winter Garden.

SHE walked him over to Eighth Avenue, and kept him so engrossed in conversation he didn't realize what he was in for until he had bought the tickets. Then it was too late.

"Holy cat!" he gasped. "An antique show?"

"We said we'd gamble," she reminded him. "Ever been to an antique show before?"

"Not since I graduated from P-40s. What is this?"

"I thought you'd like a change," she laughed, guiding him into the lobby. "From jet jobs to gimcracks."

Gerry worked up a sweat of suspicion. This could be a new twist on the old furniture-store gag. He'd have to be careful of this baby. What did she mean—"gambling on the Garden?" It was no gamble for her. She was—what the heck was the word for it?

Gerry sulked for a time while Delphine attempted to brief him on the beauty of Early Colonial. Then they wandered into a section devoted to old clocks and sailing-ship models, and he suddenly perked up. Here was something he could understand. He said he'd like to have one of those ships for the mantelpiece of his living-room.

"What living-room?" she taunted.

"Skip it," he parried. "What I mean, a guy could have a lot of fun nights working on something like that. You'd have something when you were through, too."

Delphine began pointing out the salient features of each model. She knew the names of each spar, and the type of rigging they carried. She even knew the history of some of the original vessels.

Gerry was drawn off guard again and said: "Hey! How come you know all this stuff?"

"Just an old Gloucester gal," she said cheerfully. "My grandfather and great-grandfather were sea captains. We have several old period paintings of their vessels back home."

"I thought you were a New Yorker."

"Sure. A New Yorker from New England."

"Don't tell me you have one of those old white houses with a whopping great anchor on the front lawn?" he began anew.

"A five-tonner," she acknowledged. "Widow's walk on the roof, and an old barge canal lantern at the gateway."

Gerry interrogated further: "An old sextant on the library table, and harpoons decorating the stairway?"

"Lacquered screens from Japan, and whales' teeth from Labrador," she added.

THE suspicion came up again. "And you work as a secretary in New York City?" he said caustically.

"I have to. I own it, and I have to pay the taxes and keep it up somehow," she explained cheerfully.

Next thing Gerry knew, he was saying: "What are we waiting for?" He was gripping her elbow and twisting her around to face him. "Here I am stationed in Maine; and I hope to be for years. You have a dream house in Gloucester. What a set-up!"

Delphine stared at him, pleasantly flustered. She hadn't planned it this way, but she was suddenly seeing him in a new light. This wasn't the routine Whit had ordered, either. She heard herself saying: "Do you think you will be at the jet fighter base very long?"

Gerry didn't answer. He was furious with himself for being tricked into that. He'd overcontrolled again. He'd been drawn into a situation that would have been duck soup in the old days. He thrust her arm away and turned back to the ship models. He wondered if Major Whitman had told her the real story about him. Was that why she asked whether he'd be staying in Maine?

He wondered, himself. Only yesterday after that chicken display in which he had almost collided with Dicky Lee, Tyce had pulled one of those locker-room lectures that still rankled. Tyce said he knew how it was, trying to convert from prop-craft to jets. He'd been all through it himself—the lying little snub-nosed ape! "But of course if you don't like jets, it's tough trying to force it. If you *can't* fly them, you're a menace. Lots of the *old* war pilots found the jets too hot for them." He suggested that maybe Gerry had better transfer to light bombers. Dozens of old-timers had given up and had applied for multi-engine duty. It was nothing to be ashamed of. A fellow can take just so much of this high-speed stuff. It's not your age, exactly. It's the

time you've piled up in your logbook that counts.

A captain can't punch a major in the snoot, not even in peacetime, so Gerry went over to see Major Whitman, and began from the beginning.

"Okay, Doc," he growled, flopping unceremoniously into a big chair. "You've buckled all the dials and gadgets on me. What's wrong? Let's have it, and let me get out of here!"

"Heard you had a little trouble again today, Gerry," Whitman began, and then eased up to stoke his pipe. Whitman was a slim aristocratic type who looked like a surgeon—hair prematurely gray, and steel-blue eyes that pierced like diamond drills sometimes. Quiet-spoken, understanding and consumed with a seething admiration for any man who can fly.

"Tyce says I won't do," said Gerry. "Suggests I apply for a transfer to light bombers."

Whitman took time to light his pipe. "Wish you would," he said between puffs. "I'd like the satisfaction of turning you down."

"Thanks, Doc." Gerry swallowed. "But what's wrong?"

Doc completed his firing. "Too many medals. Too many Huns. Too many hours in a Thunderbolt. Not your fault," Doc pointed out. "That's *our* problem."

"Wait a minute, Doc. I don't shoot a line, do I? I know I was lucky over there. I had a good wing-man. I could always rely on Mickey Stuart."

"For my money, Gerry," Doc said slowly, "you were the ideal war hero. You deserved everything you got."

"Thanks, Doc," Gerry said with sincerity.

"Let's try it from the other angle. You tell *me* what's wrong."

GERRY pawed his scarf, trying to think. "I can't seem to find the word for it, Doc. Every type has its own flight characteristic; and when you find it, you know what to work on. Some are heavy and handle like trucks. Others are fast and almost dainty. You have to adjust for them. With the jet, I still don't know what I'm doing, and she's flying *me*. Get what I mean?"

"No." Whitman frowned. "When we do, we'll have you leading a Group instead of flying wing-man to a kid who could use a towel behind his ears."

Gerry looked up sharply. "Leading a Group, Doc?"

"Just got it from the Colonel. We're having to put on a show for Big Brass and V.I.P.s late next week. It's got to be good, Gerry. It's got to be more than good. It's got to be perfect and spectacular. It's got to stiffen them from take-off to landing. The Air Force needs a lot of money and a lot of new spirit in our Fighter Groups, or we're sunk. There's a million Tyces in this country, but there aren't many Gerry Breens left, remember. We need more than a kid pilot leading that formation, Gerry."

"But these kids wouldn't put on a show behind a guy who flies a jet as badly as I do."

"Not the way you do now. That's what I'm trying to get at."

"When I flew a Thunderbolt, I had it," Gerry muttered savagely. "She was a tough baby, and you had to handle her that way. You had to let her know who was boss, Doc. This jet job eludes me. I know she's hot, fast, super, post-war and all that, but none of those words tells me what to do. I've got to find a word, Doc."

The Major was rubbing his fingertips in a circle on the polished top of his desk. "It's going to be a complete exercise affair, Gerry. I'd like to see you up there."

"Fat chance!" Gerry mumbled. "Guess I'll buzz down to New York over the week-end and try to forget this mess. Got any ideas?"

"Here's a telephone number," the Doc said quietly. "Cousin of mine. About your age. You might give her a buzz."

Well, he'd given her a buzz, and here he was trapped in Madison Square Garden with a gal who was leading him around by the nose. Somehow it reminded him of flying wing-man to Major Tyce.

"Let's get out of this rummage sale," he said petulantly.

Things were going badly for Delphine. She was letting Whit down. If Whit was worried this was her problem too. She would do anything for Whit. She knew his background and the rigors of his success, which could have been more spectacular and remunerative had he devoted himself to private practice. But even Whit with all his understanding couldn't know it would turn out like this.

"Perhaps you'd like to go on alone," she suggested. "You might still find some of your friends at the Albatross."

Gerry suspected she was playing *his* game now, and he wasn't going to be trapped again. Let her captain the rest of the program. Tomorrow would be different. Different? He'd avoid her the way he would a thunderhead.

Weaving through the crowd to the exit, Delphine realized she still hadn't caught what Whit was seeking. Instead, she knew that had she met Gerry under any other circumstances she would have decided he was most attractive. She would have sought him in a group. Whit had said they might lose him. Lose him because of what? Something drizzly about tradition. There was nothing wrong with Gerry. He still carried traces of his boyish humor. The lines were still there around his eyes. She liked the way he reacted to Ricco's music, and how he had thrown off his initial pique at the antique show when something new fired his interest.

Outside, the cool night air sharpened her perception. She suddenly realized she was proud to be seen with him, and that this was one of the happiest evenings she had spent in New York. She had to think fast; this was her problem, not the Air Force's.

"I'm not going on alone," Gerry was saying. "What sort of yegg do you think I am? You started all this. Let's see you wrap it up."

IN fuming silence they walked on, for nearly two blocks. It never occurred to Delphine why he had wanted to take her to the Albatross Club. The thought never entered her mind that he wanted to show her off to the boys. But she had an idea that paralleled those lines. Well, it might not work, but she could always say she was playing straight with Whit.

She signaled a taxi and gave the driver a name of a dignified hotel on upper Fifth Avenue. Gerry winced. He could picture a vast cave of a place with bronze nymphs and hideous statuary in the lobby. Weedy old ladies sipping sherry and peering at the *Wall Street Journal* through jeweled lorgnettes. Frigid, tight-lipped servitors with their precise grammar. Sterile-smelling nurses trailing convalescents at a respectful distance and all of it solemnly swathed in the trappings of a first-class mortuary.

Well, if this was Whit's idea of a gag, he'd go along with it.

"I think we'll find some of my friends here," she explained quietly. "You may like them."

"I can imagine," Gerry mused.

But it was not all as Gerry had imagined it. True, the Tempests and the Hillmans were in evening clothes. Mr. Tempest was a middle-aged man who looked as if he could still give you a working over. Mr. Hillman was a rangy gent with a handclasp like a blacksmith's vise. Their wives were smartly dressed and devoid of all maternal twitterings. They were not sipping sherry, and they seemed pleased to see a man in uniform.

"Well! Well! Well!" Mr. Tempest boomed, leading the way into a quiet foyer off the main lobby. "This is like old times. What an unexpected pleasure, Captain."

Gerry could hardly believe his ears.

"What is this?" he tried to ask Delphine with his eyes. But Delphine was too busy watching the pleasure the Hillmans were registering. . . .

Where the hours went Gerry never knew. All he knew was that a dreary evening had suddenly blossomed into something new and delightful. Mr. Tempest had a knack of putting leading questions, magnetic leads that

drew a man out. Gerry heard himself talking about the war for the first time in months. The words came freely and with simple clarity. He told them about transport strafing and the pre-invasion patrols prior to D-Day. What they did to the locomotives and the thrill of low-altitude sweeps. The women contributed intelligent queries, and Gerry responded like one inspired.

A waiter, his eyes agleam at Gerry's ribbons, brought drinks—the right drinks—and a great platter of sandwiches that reminded him of the old squadron snack bar at Duxford; and that led to more stories—events which had almost passed from his memory.

Delphine sat entranced, glorying in her rôle as she listened. His adventures suddenly became her personal triumphs. That was easy because he presented them so simply and with such natural enthusiasm. She suddenly realized that whatever Whit wanted, just had to be, and then a cold fear began lancing at her hopes.

When Mr. Hillman asked Gerry what he was doing now, it was Delphine who answered. Mr. Hillman was impressed but said: "Well, we won't ask him about the jet plane. There's probably a security screen around most of that, eh, Captain?"

THAT'S what Gerry liked about this party. Here were people who spoke his language or at least knew the meaning of the words. He said: "Some of it is hush-hush, of course, but we want the people to know what we are trying to do. It's not all gravy so far and we have a lot of problems to work out—both with the jets and the men who fly them."

He looked at Delphine and caught the fear in her eyes, and heard himself trying to reassure her. "What I mean to say is, we've got to prove the value of this type of defense so we can get authorization and finances to enlarge and improve it."

Both Mr. Tempest and Mr. Hillman understood completely and said so. It wasn't what they said that made Gerry feel good. It was the way they said it. By now he was wondering who Mr. Tempest and Mr. Hillman could be. Delphine was talking quietly to Mrs. Tempest and he feared she was betraying him and revealing the trouble he was having flying the jets. He sat thinking about Whitman and Major Tyce. He went through the tortures of slipping into Dicky Lee again and wondered what he could do about it.

"We have a place out on Long Island," he heard Mr. Tempest saying. "We'd like you to come out when we open the house for the summer. We can give you some sailing and John still plays a rumbling good game of tennis. You'll bring Delphine?"

"Oh, brother!" Gerry enthused, spellbound at the prospect. This was *better* than old times.

When they left Gerry was so enthralled he could hardly remember their names but somehow managed the perfect exit.

"This is the best time I've ever had—in the Air Force," he said with sincerity. He made the statement as though he had been rehearsing it for the past hour but the Tempests and the Hillmans felt complimented.

Delphine should have been on oxygen when he swept her out of the lobby.

Fifth Avenue was moonlit and deserted. The cop on the corner twirled his nightstick and nodded his approbation. "Boy! That sure looks like old times," he observed as Delphine and Gerry drifted past.

Delphine was aglow with her triumph. There wouldn't be too much to tell Whit but she was certain she had the formula of Gerry's distress. It was all very simple. It just required delicate handling.

Gerry was silent as they paced through the diffused lights and blurred shadows of the avenue; a setting as vague and uncertain as his mood. He was sure there was an angle, but so far it was very obscure. First Ricco's and then a rummage sale at the Garden. After that she reverses her field and they wind up wowing society in a setting that made him feel he was drawing at least one grand a month: A pleasant delusion that might stay with him for nearly twenty-four hours. He tried to compare her program with the one he had anticipated.

"That Albatross Club-musical routine would have set me back at least fifty smackers," he muttered to himself. "So far, I haven't spent a sawbuck. What's the tie-up?"

Then he gave Delphine the lead she had waited for. "Who were those swell people?" he asked.

"Mr. Tempest is my boss. He's a consulting engineer and Mr. Hillman is his associate," she said, confident that Gerry had enjoyed himself.

They walked on a block or two. He drew her closer and their strides matched. "Tell me," he said suddenly. "Why did you take me there?"

"I wanted to find out if other people—important people—would see in you what I see," she said, smiling up at him.

She felt him stiffen in defense. He looked at her with suspicion in his eye.

"Look," he said, trying to twist the situation. "Do you have any of those ship models back home?"

"I've been offered one thousand dollars for the one on the mantelpiece," she answered, to assert her independence.

Gerry whistled. "You could pay a lot of taxes with that."

"I'm not worrying about the taxes," she snapped defiantly. "I get along."

"Here's the switch again," Gerry said to himself. "Now she's assured and capable. By rights she should have made a crack about what she could do with a captain's flying pay. How does a guy handle a gal like this? All this hoop-la tonight was to find out whether her opinion of me was justified. She's a smooth operator."

Then it hit him smack in the middle. It was as though someone had suddenly turned on a fluorescent light. There was the first flicker of indistinct vision showing everything in ragged detail. Then it smoothed out like a design on silk. It was velvet, satin . . . well-defined and distinct. That was it—jet-smooth!

He stopped her under a street light and flicked his thumb under her chin. She looked hopefully into his eyes.

"Baby, you're smooth!" he said, knowing two can play at this game. "Smooth as a jet job!"

She searched his words for the hitch. This wasn't according to plan. This was where she was supposed to close her eyes and await the possession of his embrace. The first warm pressure on her lips and then the light caress on each closed eye. That was the formula, the program. Instead—

"Holy smoke, Delphine!" he exploded. "I've got it. I know what's missing. I know what you—" He wanted to tell her he'd found the word. That she'd turned on a light. That she'd made it as simple as all that.

Instead he decided to play it cozy. Now *he'd* take over.

SHE pressed up to him. Her cheek brushed the bars of his ribbons as he continued: "I'm going back first thing in the morning, Delphine. That'll give me about five days to work it out. I can cram in maybe thirty-forty hours flying jets in that time—but smooth! Those guys want a show—I'll give them one that will take their hats off."

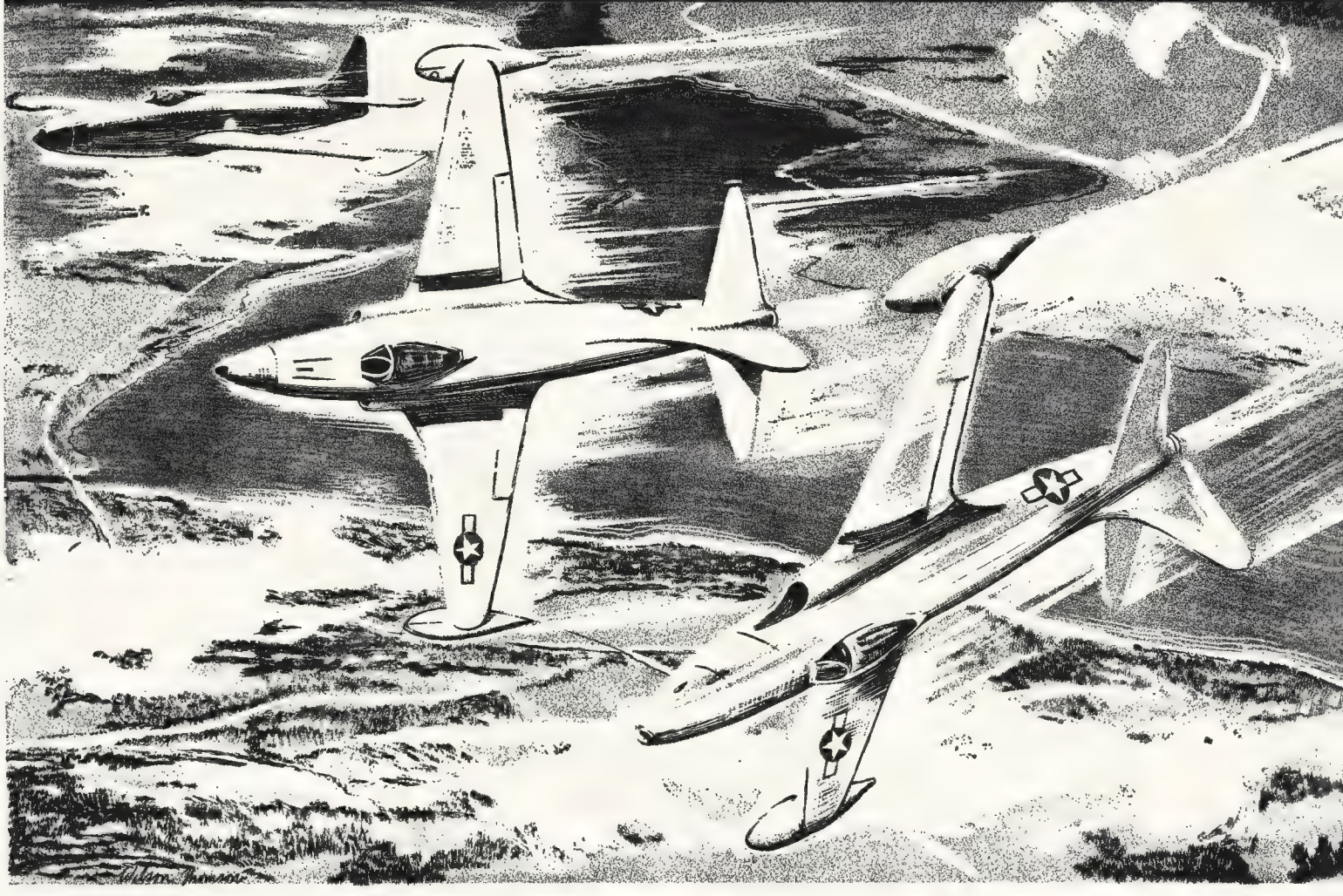
He hailed a taxi and squired her into the seat.

"You're going back in the morning?" she pleaded.

"You go home," he ordered. "I'll walk to the hotel. I got a lot of things to think about. You wouldn't understand, but you can't push a jet around like you can a Thunderbolt. The pickup is different. She comes through slower . . . delayed action; but when you get it, baby . . . Boom! That's how I almost nicked Dicky Lee. I mean . . . it all just came to me—like that!"

He slammed the taxi door and flicked her a salute.

"Is that what they call combat-fatigue, sister?" the taxi driver asked as they watched Gerry hurry away.



The dog-fights were hair-raisers. The simulated ground sweeps had them gnawing their nails.

"Well—one of us is getting it," she said slowly.

The Big Brass and the V.I.P.s are still talking—behind closed doors—about the show a jet outfit put on the other day. The new Tactical Group flying the latest jet fighter performed beyond all expectations. They racked up a tight mass-formation display the Technical Representative said was impossible. They looked as if they were stitched together. The dog-fights were hair-raisers. The simulated ground sweeps had them gnawing their nails but the fly-past, completing the Group salute, really took their hats off and established a new tradition.

A new tradition for a new Air Force!

Well, that's the way it was planned. That was the way Gerry had worked it out. With new oak leaves on his collar and a background of months overseas, he was in charge all the way and the men who followed him asked nothing more.

"Most encouraging, Major Breen," the General agreed later in the club bar. "Very smooth! Very smooth!"

"Thank you, sir. Is that all—I mean, for today?"

"That was enough!" the General boomed. "I never hope to see anything equal to that, for many a long day, son."

"Wait until you see Delphine!" Gerry replied. "Now there's a smooth performer, sir."

"Delphine?" the General puzzled.

But Gerry was hurrying away. The telephone booths were situated out in the hall.

"Hey! You're wanted on the phone," Major Whitman called, slipping out from a booth. "I was just—er—talking to Delphine."

"Thanks."

"There's more change on the shelf, if you need it," the Flight Surgeon said with a wink.

"It won't take long to say what I'm going to say," and Gerry closed the door. "Delphine!" he breathed.

"Gerry! Whit tells me it was wonderful."

"Smooth! Oh, those jet jobs, sweetheart."

"I'm so glad. Tell me about it."

"Go easy. This is long distance, remember. I'll do the talking. What about the ship model—the thousand-dollar baby?"

"It's still there, Gerry."

"A library papered with old charts?"

"Absolutely! And a ship's wheel wired for a chandelier."

"Well, look. I'm staying on here. I'm flying jets as long as they'll have me. My flying pay will more than take care of the taxes, baby."

"Gerry!" she hit a high register.

"Swell arrangement, isn't it?" he demanded.

"Wonderful!" she finally managed. "But I don't know what Mr. Tempest will do without me. I mean to say, leaving him like this."

"He's an engineer, isn't he?" Gerry said brusquely and winked at his image in the door glass. "Let him figure something out. We're going to be busy in the next few weeks getting the house fixed up."

"Fixed up? But the house is all ready. We can move right in," Delphine started to take over again.

"HOLY smoke, Delphine!" he protested, taking the play away from her. "There's got to be *one* room in that whaling museum dedicated to the glories of the Air Force!"

He waited to see how she'd take it.

"I know what you mean, dear. I think that would be nice."

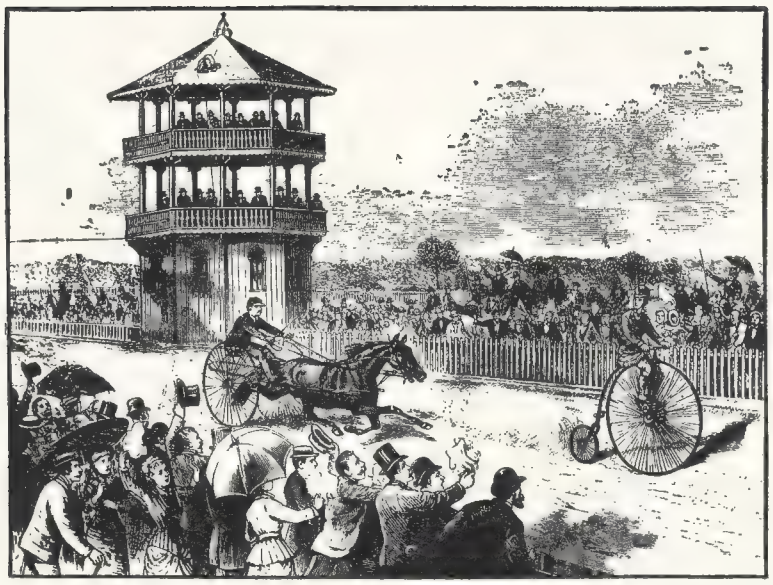
"And I was thinking of flying a wind-sock from the Widow's Walk," he added.

"Thar she blows, Grandpa!" said Delphine. "Anything . . . anything you say, darling!"

He whispered back: "You're smooth, baby. Smooth as a jet fighter, sweet. Thanks a lot!"

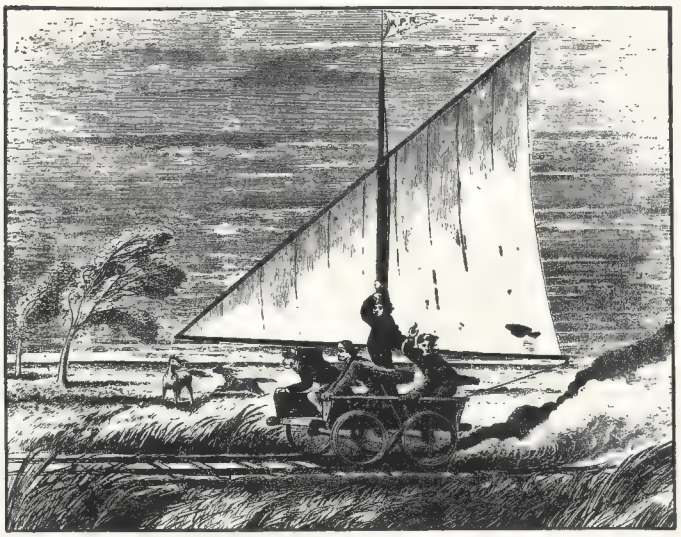
She knew what he meant.

Sports *of*



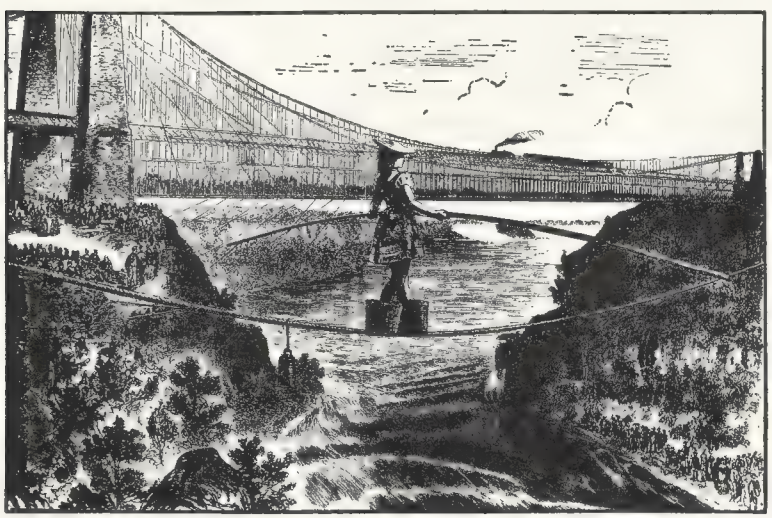
The trial of speed between Miss Elsa von Blumen, on a bicycle, and the trotting mare Hattie R., at Rochester, May 24, 1881. Miss von Blumen won this one-and-one-half-mile race, for she was given odds of half a mile ahead of the trotter.

The Ice-Velocipede with steel runners was tried out on the Hudson River in 1869.



This line-inspection car of the Union Pacific apparently sailed very close to the wind. In 1829 a similar car was used on the South Carolina Railroad.

Sleighing race in Central Park, New York City, 1875. The satisfaction of the owner of the humble sleigh as they pass the turnout of the millionaire, is evident.



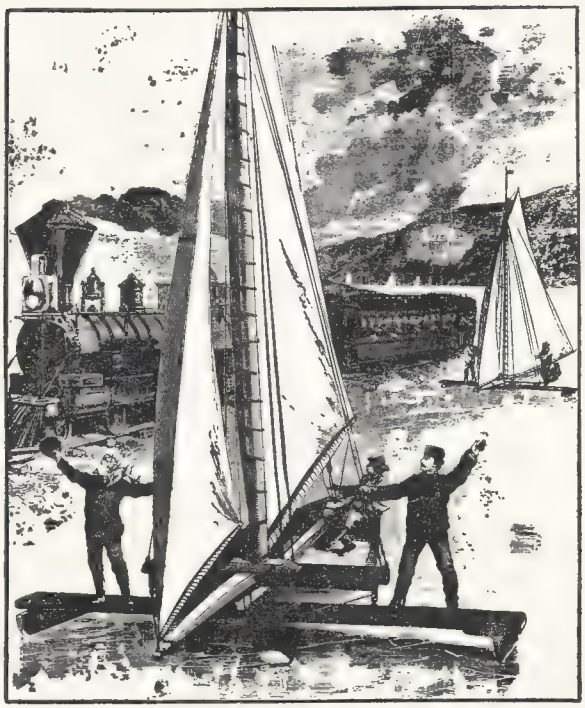
Maria Spelterini crosses the gorge just below the Niagara Falls on a tight-rope, July 1876. The 23-year-old girl walked the 1,000-foot tight-rope not only blindfolded, but also backward, and with weights on her feet, in approximately eleven minutes.

Shooting buffalo from a train, 1871. This depicts, as a contemporary weekly described it, "how the odious murders were committed by visitors brought into the region by extension of the railways."

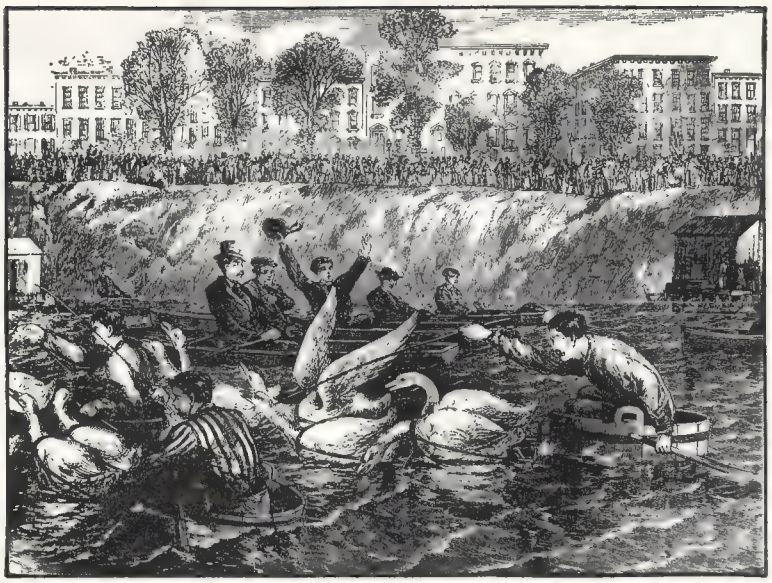
Yesteryear

Old prints from Three Lions, Schoenfeld Collection.

Sliding down Mt. Washington Railroad on "Devil's Shingles," 1878. The beginning of one of the most perilous sports marked the inauguration of the Mt. Washington cog-railroad, in 1869. Railway employees amused themselves by sliding down the cog-road on homemade toboggans. The dangerous pastime spread, and soon adventurous sportsmen and even ladies—as this scene in 1878 shows—ventured the mile-a-minute slide. This was later forbidden, after the accidental death of an employee.

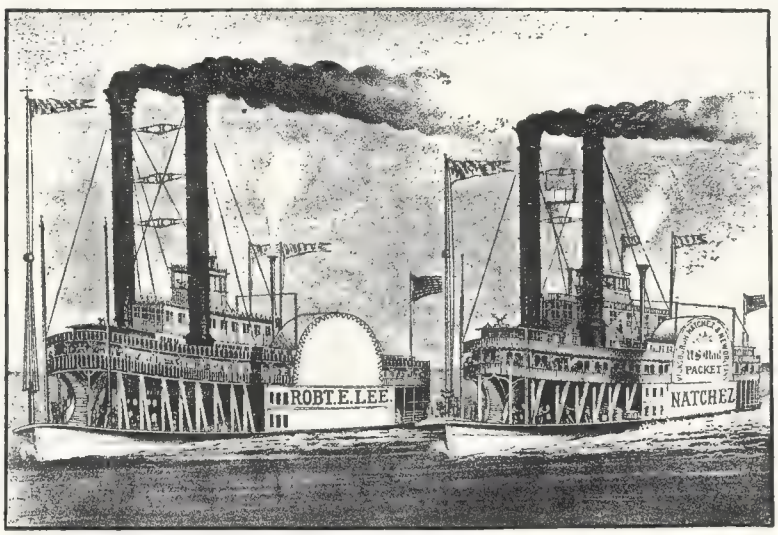


Victory of ice-boats "Zephyr" and "Icicle," over the Chicago Express train from New York, on the Hudson near Poughkeepsie, Jan. 20, 1871.



Goose race on the Lake Basin, Chicago, Ill., Sept. 23, 1869—the prize, $200, and the goose championship of America. The vessels were large planks upon which ordinary wash-tubs were fastened. Six geese were securely harnessed. The race was declared a draw!

The monster Musical Peace Jubilee of famous American bandleader Gilmore, in Boston, June 1869, massed 10,000 choral voices, 1,000 instruments; 100 Boston firemen let 100 hammerheads fall on a hundred anvils, for the Anvil Chorus of the opera "Faust."



The great Mississippi steamboat race between the *Robert E. Lee* and the *Natchez* from New Orleans to St. Louis, June 30, 1870. The *Lee's* skipper arranged to refuel in midstream; thereby he won.

A WILD TOWN, BUT HE TAMED IT. AND THEN THE GIRL CAME, AND HER FATHER THE PARSON—AND THE TOUGH CROWD FROM TEXAS.

The Marshal

Tom said: "It's your gun I want, McClain. Not your life."

CALL it Trailtown; for the old name is long gone from the maps, and the new name and the new town are another thing; the corn grows tall and the wheat is everywhere; the sun glints brightly on barbed-wire fences, and the trail of the lumbering longhorn is plowed under forever. Call it Trailtown; for it might have been any of those towns that grew beside the westward-pushing Kansas railroads; or it might have been all of them. It was Sedalia and Abilene and Wichita and Caldwell and Dodge City. It was Trailtown; and Texas turned its face northward toward it, and found a hope when the Confederacy's star had faded, found a market for the beef that ranged the chaparral and grew long of horn and lean of flank. . . .

Call *him* Long Tom Steele; for there is no such name in the books, and he exists now only in the garbled memory of old men; and some brand him hero and some brand him coward. Call him Long Tom Steele, for the name somehow fits him well, and he might have been any of those bleak-eyed men who wore a marshal's badge and stood between the Trailtowns and cowboy chaos. He was Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson and Wild Bill Hickok and martyred Tom Smith. He was marshal of Trailtown, and a choice came to him, and he made that choice in his own manner. No empires rose or fell because of this; no man's life was greatly altered except his own. This was the way of it:

He came to Trailtown over the newly laid rails of the Kansas Pacific, and he stepped down from the train in that region of stockpens and loading chutes, and stood there with his carpetbag in his hand, a tall, rangy man with fair hair which fell to his shoulders, a man given to quiet clothes and quiet ways. He stood in the dust and the darkness, and from the alert look of him he might have been gauging the town, listening to the eternal roar of it and translating a meaning from the sound. The season was still early; the first herds had come only a week before, and the Texas men were cutting the dust of the trail from their throats. He smiled a bleak and humorless smile at the knowledge of this, and found his way unerringly to that region where the liquor flowed and the crimson light burned brightly. He made here a brief inspection and asked a ques-

of Trailtown

by NORMAN FOX

tion or two; and he stood at last before Dogface Daugherty, who was mayor of Trailtown.

"I've looked your town over," said Long Tom Steele. "It smells from here to Ogallala. You need me. Here are my credentials." And he laid certain letters before Daugherty and spoke briefly of certain other towns; and Daugherty's eyes grew wide, and a great hope blossomed in them; and he said: "The job's yours, Steele."

And so it was that Long Tom Steele became marshal of Trailtown.

There had been four marshals before him, and no one of them had lasted a season. Two had fled between suns; one had filled a shallow grave in Trailtown's Boothill; one had taken a beating from Texas men in the Alamo Saloon and turned in his badge afterward and worked now at a livery stable. These four had given to Trailtown a reputation for softness; and that reputation had winged southward, across Kansas, across the Nations, across Texas. Against the record of incompetence left to him by others, Long Tom pitted himself with diligence, with ruthlessness, with impersonal thoroughness. He favored a Frontier Model Colt with an overlong barrel. He went into the Alamo his first night in Trailtown and laid the gun across the scalp of the most recalcitrant Texan he could find, and he dragged this man to the calaboose. He had long ago learned the advantage of the first move, and Trailtown was impressed.

HE was to wield that long-barreled gun many times in days to come. He was to drag many a man to the calaboose to lie out the night, and to be systematically fined one hundred dollars, then turned loose by Judge Burke the following morning. He killed no man except those who insisted on being killed, and there were three of them the first month. He made a no-gun rule, insisting that the trail herders check their weapons at his office upon hitting town, and he made it stick. He had got the jump on the Texans and brought a comparative peace to Trailtown; and the horse-and-rope men growled and damned him over their drinks, and spoke the name of Cado McClain with hope and anticipation.

"Who the devil *is* Cado McClain?" Long Tom once asked Poe Benedict.

McClain stared. "You'd rather sidestep than fight!"

They made a pulpit of the bar; here Jubal Day preached his fire and brimstone.

Now, Poe Benedict was an old man, small and baldish, and looking like rawhide left too long in the sun. He had come to Trailtown ahead of the railroad; he had come with a hand press and type-cases loaded in a wagon, and he had established the Trailtown *Bugle,* which he published intermittently when the mood was upon him. He was a crusader and a misanthropist, this Poe Benedict; and he had one friend and one enemy in the world, and both of them came out of the same bottle. Long Tom had taken to dropping in on him of a hot afternoon or a quiet evening, and when there was a question to be asked, Long Tom asked it of Poe Benedict.

"McClain?" Benedict said. "He's a cow king down on the Pecos—son of old Shanghai McClain, who built the Square-C brand up into more cows than a man could count. Young Cado lives to tree towns, and his chuck-wagon carries the badges of marshals who thought they were big enough to stop him. He'll have a herd up here before the season's over, and the Texans are waiting to see how you'll stack up against *him.*"

"So?" said Long Tom Steele, and nothing showed in his face, neither anticipation nor fear.

He had made a trade of town-taming; he had served an apprenticeship elsewhere, and stood now with his trade perfected. He had signed an agreement with Dogface Daugherty by which he pledged himself to a season's service in Trailtown. He had long ago learned that in this business of his choosing, a man must live from day to day; you began thinking about somebody like Cado McClain, and your imaginings ran away with you and from them sprouted worry. And so he banished McClain to the far fringes of his mind and went about his business; he strode the splintery boardwalks of Trailtown, and the law swung from his hip. He saw the town's summer population swell to nearly three thousand as the herds came pouring northward and the cattle trains shuttled day and night.

And then Abigail Day came to Trailtown—Abigail and her father, the Reverend Jubal Day.

They came in a wagon which held, wonder of wonders, a small organ, and they brought the gospel with them, and the first Sunday they held service in the Alamo Saloon, for no other place was offered to them. They made a pulpit of the bar, and here Jubal Day preached his fire and brimstone; they moved the organ to a stand upon the sawdust-sprinkled floor, and here Abigail played the old hymns. And Long Tom Steele, dropping in as a matter of routine, looked upon her and saw the fairness of her face and the golden glory of her hair and the full-bodied aliveness of her, and came again another Sunday and another—But not to the Alamo. After the first Sunday, flapping canvas was stretched over a frame skeleton, and Trailtown had a church. You could say of the Texans that they were a wild lot; they fetched a mighty thirst northward with them, and a tendency to squander the pay of dusty weeks in a single riotous night; but you must say, too, that they were generous, and that they could admire a man like Jubal Day and a girl like Abigail; and they were lavish when the collection plate was passed.

After the first month the Reverend Day took a place in the town council; and Long Tom saw him often, a gentle-eyed man, thin of face and thin of body, a man of shiny serge and worn boots, a man who believed the things he preached. And sometimes Long Tom visited the quarters father and daughter had taken; he came on matters of business concerning the town; but one Sunday afternoon he came with a buggy rented from the livery stable, and the business that fetched him was no business but his own.

He stood in a bare room which Abigail had made bright by calico curtains and various other devices born of the ingenuity of people who are poor. He stood there wearing a knee-length plantation coat and cradling a creamy Stetson against his body, and he said in a solemn voice: "I'd consider it a great honor if you'd go riding with me, Miss Day."

She had learned to know him, of course; she had given him her smiles, but perhaps they had been impersonal smiles; he had never been sure. Now she shot a quick glance at her father, who was burrowed deep in a chair, his Bible spread open before him. It was a glance that asked not for permission but for some sort of confirmation; and whatever passed between them was lost to Long Tom, but she said: "I'd be very happy to go riding, Mr. Steele."

She came to the buggy bonneted and carrying a parasol for use against the sun's steady hotness; he helped her up to the seat and took the reins and went clattering between the two rows of false-fronts that were Trailtown's main street, and he found a road that led outward to the flats beyond town; they drove for an hour and another, making little talk, and then he brought the team to a halt in the shade of a grove of cottonwoods, and they sat looking at the stretch of land below them, the land and the river and the rising dust far to the south that betokened other herds coming up out of Texas. He thought then of Cado McClain, but only fleetingly.

He took Abigail into his arms and kissed her.

HE had not planned this; he'd asked for himself no more than these few hours with her. He felt her turn limp within his arms; he tasted the surrendering hunger of her lips. And then she was struggling with him, freeing herself. He said: "I suppose I should say that I'm sorry. But I'm not."

She said: "You'd better take me home."

He reached for the reins and unwrapped them from around the whipstock. He held them in his hands for a moment and then he said, desperately: "What's wrong with me?"

She said: "I don't know. I'm just afraid of you."

He got the team into motion, and he drove back to Trailtown faster than he'd driven out; he handed her down at her father's door, and they were very stiff and proper with each other, and over-polite. He returned the team to the livery stable and shucked off the long black coat and went directly to the smelly office of the Trailtown *Bugle.* Poe Benedict was setting type, his hand shuttling from case to case; and to him Long Tom said without prelude: "What's wrong with me?"

Benedict had loaded himself with more whisky than one man should carry, but it only showed in his eyes. He quoted softly: " 'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us, to see oursel's as ithers see us! It wad frae monie a blunder free us!' I saw the pair of you go riding down the street. But she wanted none of you—is that it?"

"That's it."

Benedict said: "It's your work—not you. Can't you understand how it would be with her? Waiting every night for you, and never knowing when they'd carry you home feet first. Living with *that* every hour of every day!"

Long Tom said: "That's half of it, Poe. What about the other half? What's wrong with *me?*"

Benedict set his work aside. "One man cannot turn another inside out, even when he's asked. Come to me sometime when I'm drunk. Maybe I'll find the right words then."

Long Tom said: "I think you've told me what I need to know."

He went out to the street and strode along it purposefully, and raw anger walked with him. He saw this town now as all towns, the ones he'd known and the ones he'd know, and he hated it and them. Dogface Daugherty had said that first night: "Let the Texans run wild, and we'll have to lock the doors of our establishments and board up the windows. But if we clamp down too hard on them, they'll take their herds to other towns, and we'll lose their business." Long Tom had listened without listening; he had heard all this in other towns, and he had expected to hear it again. Now he was remembering that they asked a marshal to walk a middle course, and he had done it well; he had kept the trade of the Texans in Trailtown, but he'd kept the law too.

But the man who walked that middle course was neither of one element nor the other. He was hated by the men whose exuberance he curbed; he was tolerated by the men whose pay he drew. He lived alone, and he walked alone; and the love of a woman was not for him.

TO Dogface Daugherty he said when he faced the mayor a short while later: "I want you to tear up that agreement. I'm quitting."

"Before the season's over?" Daugherty said in horror.

"I've tamed your town. Anybody can hold down the lid, now that I've fastened it."

"Then if that's so, you're a fool to walk out. You've done the work, and the rest of the season you'll only have to draw the pay."

"I'm through with town-taming."

Craftiness lighted Daugherty's eyes. "Then you've heard," he said.

"Heard what?"

"That the Square-C crossed the river late this afternoon and is bedding down on the flats. Cado McClain will have his crew in town after sundown."

"McClain's just another Texan."

"McClain's the hope of every Texan who has walked quiet and talked small since you laid down the law, Steele. McClain has to tree this town, because the Texans are counting on his doing it. Is that why you picked tonight to run out?"

Long Tom slapped him, a backhanded blow that sent Daugherty reeling against the wall. Long Tom said: "When I've handled McClain, you'll have your tame town. When that chore is done, I'll be back. To watch you tear up that agreement!"

His finger-marks were red streaks across Daugherty's cheek, and anger was in Daugherty's eyes, anger and humiliation and fear. Then Daugherty stiffened to attention and said: "Listen! They've come. Already."

They came in the manner of Texas men, crowding their horses to a high gallop and roaring down the street, their guns booming at the sky, their wild *ki-yipee's* adding to the bedlam. They came like exuberance unleashed, they came wild and unshaven and loaded for bear. And at their head rode a tawny-haired youngster with the stamp of arrogance upon him; and Long Tom Steele looked through the window at Cado McClain and knew that crisis had come.

He said: "They'll need an hour for bathing and shaving. Then they'll really start feeling their oats. Get word to McClain, Daugherty. Tell him we have a no-gun law in this town. Tell him it's the same law for two-bit cowpoke or money-fat cattle king. Tell him to have his gun turned in before an hour is up, or I'll be coming down the street after him. Have you got that straight?"

He went then to his quarters, a little room he occupied in the back of Freeman's Mercantile. He slept here, and sometimes he cooked his meals here, though usually he ate at the Chinaman's. He sat in silence now, watching through the window as the day faded away, watching the people who passed, and knowing that his ultimatum would be town news shortly, knowing that the bets were being made, knowing that the length of his life span might be this hour that was running out. He had a bottle here; it had lasted him all season. He had tobacco and papers; but he touched none of these things. Some men are slaves to tobacco or liquor or cards or women; a man in his trade had to own all of himself. He had walked with this righteousness of necessity for a long time, and he was tired of it.

Sometimes he looked at his watch, and once he said aloud to the silence of the room: "I'll *have* to kill him."

There was a trick of getting close enough to a man to buffalo him with the long-barreled gun; he could do that to Cado McClain, perhaps, and bed him down in the calaboose, and Judge Burke would fine him come morning. But when you handled it that way, you had Cado McClain to buffalo another night and another; it would be that way with a Cado McClain; and if a man were to be free of his trade after tonight, free to walk to a girl and tell her that he *was* free, the job had better be finished completely. He remembered the men who had insisted on dying; there'd been those three right here in Trailtown. He remembered them reluctantly, but he thought: *One more, and the job is done.*

He looked at his watch, and it lacked ten minutes of the hour.

He came out of the building and started down the street, his pace steady but unhurried. He came along the

At the organ, upon the sawdust-sprinkled floor, Abigail played the old hymns. And Long Tom saw the fairness of her face.

familiar boardwalk, looking neither to left nor to right, his eyes and his mind focused ahead. Then he was abreast of the Trailtown *Bugle's* office, and on impulse, he turned inside. Poe Benedict was in the back room; he stood inking a galley, and he laid a white strip of paper upon the moist type and sent the roller singing, and lifted the galley proof and looked at it, then repeated this process with a second galley. He turned then; he was a full hour drunker than he'd been before, and he said: "Well, Tom?"

NOW that the time had come to speak, words came hard to Long Tom Steele. He said: "You've heard about the deadline I laid down for McClain, I suppose. I'm doing this chore the hard way, Poe. That means that one of us won't walk away afterward. It might be me; it might be him. I just wanted you to know that you are the only friend I've had in this town."

Benedict listened in studied silence. Then he said: "I see it now. She would have been good for you. She would have turned you human in time. Just knowing her a little while did this much for you."

Long Tom said: "I never was one for talking."

Poe Benedict shrugged. "Yes, I heard about McClain," he said. "One way or the other, it calls for an extra. The paper will be on the street tonight. I've two front pages made up. Whichever way it turns out, I'll be ready to go to press."

Long Tom stepped across the room and lifted one of the damp proofs and looked at it, and the first line read: "Cado McClain died tonight. To Trailtown, who knew him each season, he was a strange mixture of wildness and arrogance and generosity. . . ."

There was more, much more, but this wasn't the thing Long Tom wanted to read. He reached for the second proof, and saw what was printed there. He read: "Long Tom Steele died tonight. Trailtown knew him only briefly; he came to us with a record of towns tamed, and he succeeded here where four other men had failed. It was inevitable that sooner or later he would meet his match, and this happened when he attempted to arrest Cado McClain for violating the no-gun law which Steele had established and heretofore successfully maintained. Steele was a strange, taciturn man, with few friends; one might speculate as to what sort of child he was, what sort of boy he became: but we knew him only as a man whose cold indifference to anything but the needs of the law made him eminently fit for the work he performed. Tolerance and generosity were not in Long Tom Steele. We who admired him like to think that this was only because there was no place for these things in the kind of work he chose to do."

He put the proof down, and turned slowly and faced Benedict. He said: "Is this what you meant, Poe, about not being able to turn a man inside out, even when he asks."

" 'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us,' " Benedict quoted softly, " 'to see oursel's as ithers see us.' You see, Tom, you were to be dead when that was printed."

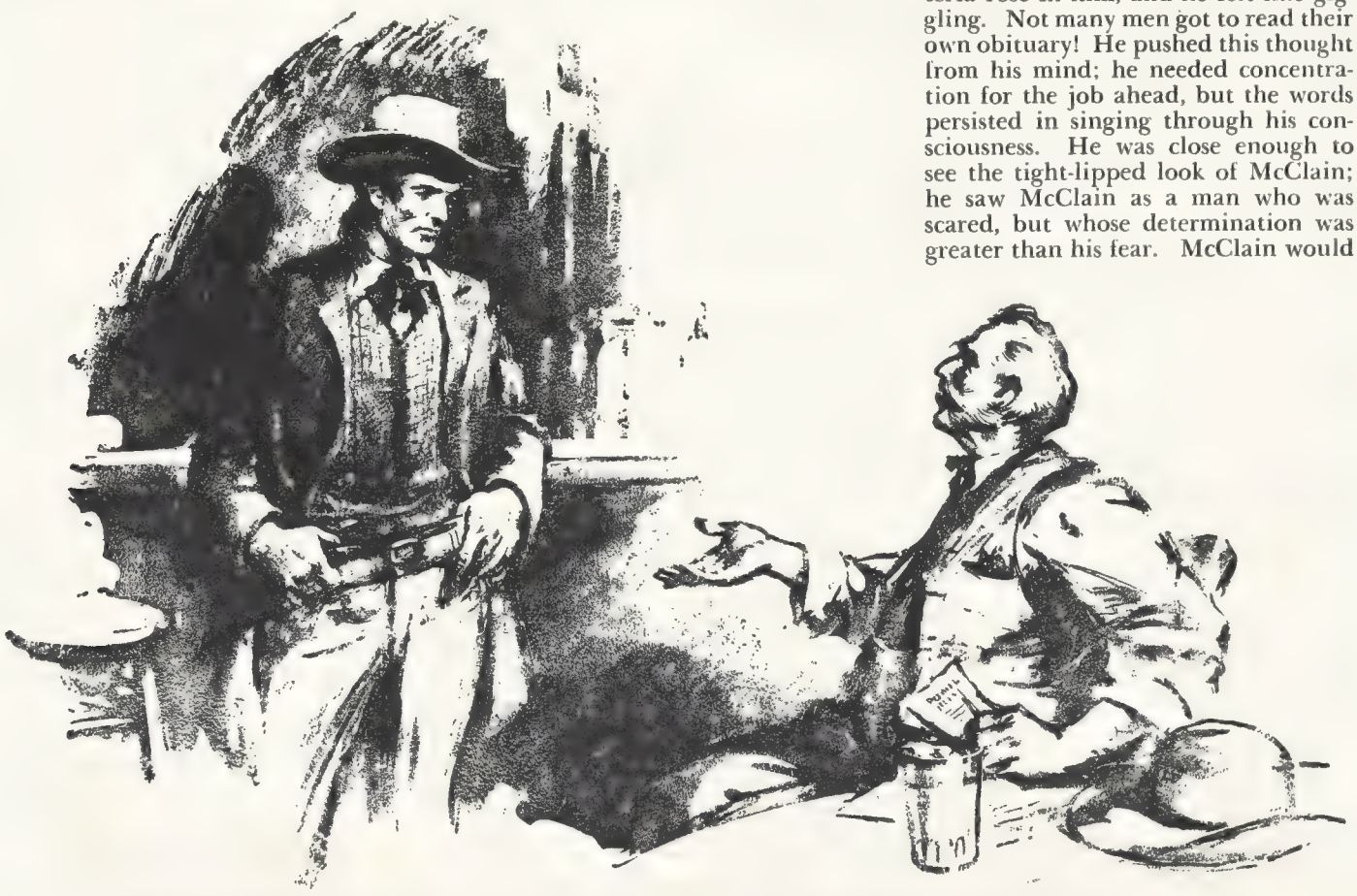
Long Tom looked at his watch, and the hour was up.

He said: "I take back what I said, Poe. You are the only friend I ever had. In any town."

He strode out into the street. He looked toward the Alamo and saw its batwings part, and the tawny-haired youngster step out beneath the wooden awning. He looked to the left and right and saw that the street was deserted; from the cover of doorways and the slots between buildings men stood watching, men who had heard of the ultimatum and were keeping safe. He had known such moments before.

Steele was a strange, taciturn man with few friends. . . .

He saw Cado McClain come down from the Alamo's porch and stride out into the dust. He saw McClain walk toward him, his gun at his thigh, his hands hanging limply. He saw the distance dissolve as each marched toward the other, and a strange hysteria rose in him, and he felt like giggling. Not many men got to read their own obituary! He pushed this thought from his mind; he needed concentration for the job ahead, but the words persisted in singing through his consciousness. He was close enough to see the tight-lipped look of McClain; he saw McClain as a man who was scared, but whose determination was greater than his fear. McClain would



"McClain will have his crew in town after sundown. . . . Is that why you picked tonight to run out?"

Illustrated by Raymond Thayer

"I'd consider it a great honor if you'd go riding with me, Miss Day."

wait for him to start drawing first; he was the law, and that would be necessary. He could keep from drawing; he could walk onward, and his doing this would bewilder McClain, would leave the youngster unprepared for the moment when Long Tom would strike at him with his gun-barrel and bring him to his knees.

He could do that, and McClain would no longer be a menace *this* night. But tomorrow night—

Tolerance and generosity were not in Long Tom Steele. . . .

He stopped in his tracks; fifteen feet separated him from McClain, and McClain stopped too, indecisively. Long Tom looked across the space between them and said: "It's your gun I want, McClain. Not your life."

McClain stared in disbelief, his eyes widening, and then he said scornfully: "They told it scary about you, Mister. I think they lied. You'd rather sidestep than fight!"

A man couldn't change himself over in a moment, and a high anger lanced through Long Tom. "Drag it and make your fight, or drag it and pass it over," he said.

McClain hesitated; and hesitating, he lost—but not completely. He gingerly lifted his gun from the holster, but he tossed it into the dust at Long Tom's feet. "If you want, stoop over and pick it up," McClain said.

We knew him only as a man whose cold indifference to anything but the needs of the law made him eminently fit for the work he performed.

Now it was Long Tom's turn to hesitate, and he did, but only for a second. He knelt then, putting one knee in the dust, and in him was a burning consciousness of every eye that looked upon this scene. He lifted Cado McClain's gun and thrust it into the waistband of his own trousers. He said: "You've set an example for your crew. I'll expect them to turn in their guns too. Have your fun, but leave a little liquor for the next bunch out of Texas. Fair enough?"

McClain grinned, and the grin made him a boy. "Fair enough," he said.

Long Tom turned and headed back down the street. Behind him and before him, and to the left and the right, men suddenly found their tongues, and a great babble went up; but he was oblivious to it. Abreast of the Trailtown *Bugle,* he saw Poe Benedict standing unsteadily in the doorway. Benedict held two long fluttering galley proofs in his hand; he folded these carefully and tore them in pieces; he let the pieces go fluttering. Long Tom lifted his hand in salute and said no word, though this was their parting.

Fifteen minutes later he stood in the living-quarters of the Reverend Jubal Day and his daughter, stood there again with his hat in his hand and his eyes on Abigail, and he said: "I don't know whether you've heard the news. It doesn't matter. Some men will brand me hero after tonight; some will brand me coward. I had a choice to make, and I made it in my own way. But *you* were mixed into it."

Abigail said: "There was to be a gun-fight. We heard that much."

Long Tom said: "There was no fight. You were afraid of two things, only you thought they were one. You were afraid of my work and what it would be like to wait each day, never knowing whether I'd come home. But mostly you were afraid of me and what my work was taking away from me—the heart and soul, the tolerance and the generosity. A woman like you would want those in the man of her choice."

Her hands fluttered aimlessly. "Maybe that was it."

"Tonight I might have killed a man, but I didn't. I gave him half a victory and kept the other half for myself, to bring to you. He saved his face by forcing me into the dust, and so he'll behave himself the rest of the season. That makes it a tamed town, and I'm free to leave. I've money in a Kansas City bank. I want to try ranching. Would you like being a rancher's wife?"

She lifted her eyes, and her eyes were shining. She said, "I'd like anything that you'd like. . . . Now."

He said: "Your father could perform the ceremony, and we could be out of this town tonight. Would that be too soon?"

She came toward him, a cry welling in her throat, and his arms reached out and enfolded her and drew her close. She raised her lips to his, saying nothing, and thus she gave her answer. He asked for no more than this. It was all the beginning a man could want.

Big Joe *and* Little Joe

A DRAMA OF THE DAY'S WORK—IN A VERY MODERN LITTLE FOUNDRY, WITH SOME VERY MODERN NOT-SO-LITTLE PROBLEMS.

by RAY MILLHOLLAND

IT wasn't the blistering heat of a mid-July afternoon that inspired this mood of pessimism in the breast of an otherwise exuberantly optimistic young business man; it was the fact that Bill Guilford had just come from the office of the Edgetsville Municipal Light and Power Commission, where he had been told—for the tenth time in six months—that there wasn't a chance in the world of his getting his foundry connected up to city power. Which, in turn, meant that he would have to go on making his own power for his electric melting-furnace with an undersized Diesel engine-generator set.

So it was just one of those routine days—if you are careless with words—when Bill answered his ringing telephone, to hear the purchasing agent of Gram Chemicals say: "Got some nice news for you, Bill. We're rushing construction of a new battery of acid chambers. The job requires forty thousand pounds of castings that will have to be in our plant within sixty days. So get on your working clothes."

"Sounds swell," agreed Bill, but not joyously. "To be honest with you, I can't handle all of it. Suppose I run down tomorrow and talk this over with you?"

"What are you trying to do, jack up the price on me?" demanded the Gram purchasing agent. "Don't get any funny ideas. Your little one-pot foundry isn't our only source of supply, remember."

"I'm trying to be on the level with you," said Bill. "I want your business, and at the price you're paying. But I've got a melting capacity of just twelve hundred pounds per day."

"That's always the trouble with you little fellows," snapped Gram's purchasing agent. "You talk fast, getting your foot in the door. But when a big job is thrown at you, you start crawfishing. Take the whole job, or you get no more business from us. What's your answer?"

"How would you like it," argued Bill, "if I suddenly shut off scheduled deliveries to you while I was filling a big rush order for somebody else?"

"My job is to get in the castings for this plant. Forty thousand pounds, delivered in sixty days, or nothing, remember. Think that over, and call me back tomorrow morning with your answer. G'by!"

Bill hung up and walked out into the foundry. Adam Werner and Tim Curry, his two journeymen molders, were swinging a glowing pouring ladle from under the spout of the small, six-hundred-pound-capacity electric melting-furnace, getting ready to pour the second and last heat of the day.

With a powerful heave of his big shoulders, Adam swung the pouring ladle suspended from the creaking jib crane over a big mold. When the last driblet of molten metal from the ladle had gone into the pouring hole, Tim Curry's haggard face exploded into a grin:

"An empty ladle and a full mold. The luck of the Irish was wid us again!"

Very deliberately Adam opened a round paper box and placed a pinch of snuff between his teeth and his upper lip. He nodded ponderously at the small electric furnace:

"Like a good little horse trying to pull a big wagon," he said almost sadly. "Good, yes—but too damn' *little*."

Bill walked away to the engine-room, where a high-speed Diesel, direct connected to an alternating-current generator, was purring away under idling load. There was a strong odor of hot electrical-insulation varnish. A one-horsepower electric fan was playing upon the generator.

Corky McCann, Bill's engineer, came around from the other side of the Diesel and gave the generator frame a light touch with his hand. Corky was an ex-machinist mate of Bill's old Navy submarine chaser, and knew tricks not in the book, about how to get the last kick of power out of a Diesel.

Corky swabbed his forehead with a ball of engine-room waste and said: "You cut the load off this baby just in time. Another ten minutes, and this generator would have started throwing fire. It wasn't built for the amps that furnace draws."

"How is the engine taking it?" asked Bill.

Corky smiled at his engine.

"Them Little Joe Diesels don't know when to quit. But that generator ain't got heavy enough wire in her to cut the mustard."

Bill laid his hand upon the generator frame, and jerked it away almost blistered.

"That's why I got that fan blowing on it," remarked Corky dryly.

Bill said: "Look, sailor, we've got to get three heats a day out of the furnace. Now give with a fancy idea."

Slowly, Corky rolled the ball of engine-room waste between his palms.

"Not unless it's snowing outside, you won't pull three heats a day with this juice-mill," he said firmly. He turned and walked to an open window, where he rested his arms on the sill and gazed across the railroad tracks at a large, idle factory.

"C'MERE and look at something," he said, inviting Bill over with a jerk of his head. "See that concrete-block building with an exhaust-pipe sticking up out of the roof? Inside that place—standing there, doing absolutely nothing—is an eight-hundred-horse Diesel engine. It's a big brother to this Little Joe of ours. Its generator will handle four furnaces like ours without getting as warm as your hand."

"That engine might just as well be in Buna Buna," said Bill, mentioning a place in the Southwest Pacific that both he and Corky had seen too many times to suit either of them. "I tried to rent that Diesel when I first opened up here, before I bought this one. But old Gaxton wouldn't deal unless I bought the whole plant, cheap, for a quarter of a million."

"A little guy with a cold-chisel nose?" asked Corky out of the side of his mouth, his eyes still avariciously fixed on the building across the tracks.

"Check," said Bill.

Corky rolled an artistic cigarette and lighted it before saying: "Yeah, I ran afoul of him this noon, when I

was taking a gander at that Big Joe engine. Guess he took me for one of them hoboes that sleeps off a cheap jag in his sawdust shed. So, I straightened him out—"

"Good grief!" said Bill, jumping to conclusions too fast.

"Naw, not that," said Corky in a tone of offended dignity. "I just told 'em if he didn't pry loose from a couple of bucks that must be sewed to his skin and get all that sawdust cleared out o' the shed, some dope might toss a cigarette in there and burn his whole plant down for him."

"I bet he loved that," said Bill dryly.

"Just so-so," remarked Corky over his shoulder. "He didn't work up to holding hands with me until I said, what with him being too tight to hire a night watchman for the place, it looked like he was trying to sell it to the insurance company."

"Ummm," said Bill.

"Then he said he was going to show me a shotgun," continued Corky in a bored tone, "so I left."

Bill looked at his watch, and remembering that he had a check from the Gram Chemical Works to deposit, went out to his car and drove down to the bank.

By the time the teller had returned his deposit book, the blinds on the front doors had been lowered, and all other customers had left.

John Souders, the bank president, motioned for Bill to come through the small swinging gate to his desk.

Bill thought: *Oh-oh, I bet I slipped up figuring my balance for last Saturday's payroll—* But Souders greeted him with a heavy smile, and said: "I've been keeping pretty close tabs on your account, Bill. For a while there—when you were buying all that equipment to get started—you had us worried."

THE banker picked up a letter from his desk, adding, "Here's an inquiry about your credit standing from a dealer in—um, electrical machinery. He wants to know if you're good for fifteen hundred dollars. Says you're offering your notes spread over twelve monthly payments." He laid the letter down and leaned back in his chair. "You'll have trouble enough meeting your notes with us, without taking on another big obligation like this. You can't expect the bank to go on renewing your notes while outsiders are draining off your working capital."

Bill tried to explain that he needed a larger generator for his Diesel engine, in order to be able to turn out three heats a day, instead of two.

Souders listened to Bill's story, then said guardedly: "It could be that your power plant is big enough for the job. Maybe that rough-talking ex-sailor you got running it doesn't know his stuff and is trying to get away with blaming it on the engine—or that electrical thingumajig that gets hot."

Little hard points came into Bill's eyes, but he managed to keep most of his resentment out of his voice:

"Corky served as an engine-man on my subchaser, in the war," he said quietly. "Mr. Gaxton may consider him short on diplomacy, but I've bet my life on Corky's ability to handle Diesels, and come out of it with my skin still able to hold kerosene, too many times—"

"I didn't say that I got the idea from Gaxton," broke in Souders, visibly uncomfortable.

Bill smiled; but it wasn't a pleasant smile:

"If Gaxton didn't feed you that dirt about Corky, I apologize," he said, rising from his chair. "Forget it. I'm getting Gaxton on the brain, it looks like."

Souders wagged his head slowly:

"I don't understand your antagonism for Gaxton, Bill. He has done a great deal for Edgetsville. You know, Bill—" Souders was looking pointedly at him—"I honestly believe that Gaxton admires your drive and ability. Especially the way you know how to make those expensive kinds of castings for the chemical industry. Every business he backs makes money. The tile works, the milk-condensing plant, the chair factory—all are solid going concerns today."

"I heard all about that from the Chamber of Commerce committee, first time they showed me around town," said Bill. "But when I started looking around for the men who furnished the special know-how to start those plants, I dug up another story. They all had faded out of the picture,

and Gaxton took over just before the plants worked themselves out of the red and began making money."

"That all happened before I came here," said Souders, glancing up at the clock. "Gracious, it's almost four. I'm due at a special city council meeting, this minute."

"Swell. I'll go along with you," said Bill. "Maybe they'll take up my petition to hook onto the city power line."

The council was in session when they arrived—all in their shirtsleeves except Gaxton, who sat with a straight spine, his double-breasted blue serge coat primly buttoned. Gaxton appeared as cool as the color of his ice-blue eyes as he listened to the clerk of the council read the matter of special business for which the special meeting had been called.

Several council members glanced unwelcomingly at Bill and then to Souders, who shrugged—as much as to say, "It's not my doings, boys. He just tagged along," and sat down.

Only one councilman gave Bill a friendly smile. It was Pat Harrell, a young attorney with aspirations for the office of county prosecutor, and a young man with scant reverence for seniority and tradition.

The clerk had finished reading by the time Bill had found a seat. Souders leaned forward for a whispered exchange with Gaxton, then leaned back to say, in an incisive tone of inquiry:

"Has anyone thought to translate this estimate for a new power-feeder line into what it is going to do to the tax-rate?"

THE president of the council glanced over at Elliot, the superintendent of the municipal water and light plant, who seemed to be attending the proceedings in the rôle of consulting expert:

"Got any idea, Jim?"

"Twenty-one cents and four mills, it will increase the tax-rate," answered the superintendent tersely.

"I'd say it was worth it," drawled Pat Harrell. "We've got to do something about getting a bigger feeder line into this town, or some of our growing new industries will be hamstrung for lack of power."

"Pat's for it, because it would raise his own tax duplicate by about two dollars—maybe not that much," remarked the man on Gaxton's left.

There were enough chuckles elicited by this sally for the president to glance Gaxton's way and receive an abbreviated nod.

"Guess we're ready for the vote, then. All in favor of Enabling Ordinance Seventeen, authorizing rebuilding the city's power-feeder line between here and Central City, will indicate by the usual sign. . . . Those not in favor, likewise. . . . Not carried."

The president tossed the rejected ordinance to the clerk, and leaned forward as if to rise:

"Do I hear a motion to adjourn?"

"I arise on a point of order," drawled Pat Harrell—to the accompaniment of unanimous frowns from his colleagues. He fixed his attention, pointedly, upon the superintendent of the light plant. "Is it true that no new connections are being made to the city power lines?"

"Well, yes and no," replied the superintendent. "If you mean connecting up to give a returned veteran electric lights for his home and family, we're doing that as fast as we can get wire and meters. But we can't look after the veterans and allow new factory loads on our lines."

Pat turned with a look of polite inquiry to Bill:

"Has the refusal of the city to connect you to its power lines handicapped your foundry in any way?"

"It certainly has," said Bill, jumping to his feet. "I would never have located in Edgetsville if I had known that I was going to get this runaround about power."

"This isn't anything we can settle now," broke in the president of the council. "I suggest that Mr. Guilford submit a statement in writing for the next regular meeting."

"I move to adjourn," said the man on Gaxton's right.

Pat smiled down at him.

"Sorry, Samuels, but you're out of order. I've got the floor. . . . Now, Mr. Guilford, you are a graduate engineer with experience in solving electrical-power problems, are you not?"

"I have a degree in electro-metallurgy," answered Bill.

Pat stretched both arms in a relaxing gesture and inquired blandly:

"In that case, would you mind giving this body, in a few words, an *expert's* suggestion on how the forward-looking city of Edgetsville can provide you with electrical power *without* overloading any further its already overloaded power lines?"

"I have one solution," said Bill calmly. "If you will allow me to connect onto your power lines, I'll use the current only between midnight and five in the morning—when the only load on your system is the street-lights. That way, I can double the output of castings from my foundry."

"That won't work, neither," broke in the light-plant superintendent hastily. "Whenever a fire happens at night, everybody in town gets up and turns on all their lights. If we started the high-pressure fire pumps—blooie, would go the main circuit-breakers if your load was on the line too. Half the town might burn down before we could get power restored."

He scarcely knew whether to

Pat Harrell looked at Bill, and asked: "Do you agree with that?"

"In the case of a serious fire, I'm afraid I'll have to," admitted Bill reluctantly. Then suddenly he half-turned and addressed his next remarks in Gaxton's direction. "There is, however, another solution to the *whole* power shortage in Edgetsville. If Mr. Gaxton would put that big idle Diesel-engine generator of his into service and pump power back into the city lines with it, this town would have plenty of power, and to spare."

From the tense silence, Bill knew that he had committed *lèse majesté*.

"Meeting is adjourned," said the president of the council, hastily.

Out on the sidewalk, afterward, Bill grinned ruefully at Pat:

be glad—or sorry. It was Gaxton's big empty factory that was burning.

"Much obliged, fella, for giving me the chance to get my story on the record."

"A couple of young guys got steam-rollered by a gang of log-rolling old geezers, you mean," said Pat; then shrugged it off. "Anyhow, it was fun getting that old fox Gaxton out on a limb and giving it a good shake."

Bill glanced up and saw Gaxton standing on the city hall steps, not ten feet away.

Gaxton noddded and said, "Good evening, boys," and walked on about his business.

Pat flicked a sidelong glance at Bill and said: "With that poker face and a deck of cards, I could eat high on the hog for the rest of my life without ever writing another brief."

"That reminds me," said Bill, reaching for his limp wallet. "I haven't paid you for checking the abstract on my place."

"PUT it on the cuff, until you're a rich man," said Pat. "Then I'll soak you plenty for it. . . . Wait, how much you got in that poke?"

"Just two fives," answered Bill.

"Give me one of them," said Pat. "I just remembered that my gas-tank is empty, and I've got a call to draw a bedside will, up Sugar Creek way, tomorrow. Thanks. This entitles you to one year's priceless legal advice, remember."

It was worth—almost, anyhow—five dollars for the lift to his depressed spirits that Bill had received from Pat. He walked around to the other side of the square, where his car was parked, to find Elliot the superintendent of the water and light plant, standing beside it.

"Going out my way?" suggested Bill hospitably.

"No, thanks—got my car down the street a ways," said the superintendent—a little louder, perhaps, Bill thought, at the time, than necessity seemed to require.

Then, in a guarded undertone, Elliot said: "Follow me out to your place. Too many big ears flapping around here."

Five minutes later Bill parked his car in front of his office. He walked down the unpaved street a half-block, where the superintendent had parked

his car and was standing beside it, gazing up at three transformers on city-owned utility poles, as though inspecting their condition.

"See those transformers?" the superintendent said, nodding up but not pointing at them. "Well, they used to be connected with this place, before you bought it."

"That's the tantalizing part of it," said Bill, not too enthusiastically. "And there's an underground conduit, with the wires still in it, that leads from a big fuse-box in my engine-room, right up within a foot of those transformers."

"Well, here's the dope—strictly on the q.t., you understand," said the superintendent. "I wasn't blowing hot air when I told the council that I was scared to death of a big fire, at night, that would call for throwing both high-pressure fire pumps on the line. It's never happened, y'understand. But it would be just too bad if it did."

"How much power would the two pumps draw?" asked Bill, beginning, he thought, to catch the drift of things.

"Seventy-five k.v.a., apiece; one-fifty with both on the line."

"That's just the all-out limit my generator will deliver," said Bill.

"I guess we're thinking the same thing, then," said the superintendent. "Now, if I was to send a pole gang down here, early tomorrow morning, and splice those transformer leads onto your conduit-wires—well, you'd never hear a kick out of me if you sort of *happened* to use a little of the city's juice, say, for one melting heat a night between midnight and five in the morning."

"HOW am I supposed to kick back to you for this?" asked Bill cautiously.

"Not a thin dime to me, personally," snapped the superintendent, almost angrily. "All I'm asking is, if a big fire should bust out in town some night—or at any time of the day, either—then you'll dump your furnace load and start pumping all the power that your engine will make back into my lines."

Bill chopped a nod of assent. "It's a deal."

"Wait for the second-siren alarm before you start pumping juice. But come on as fast as you can, after that," said the superintendent. He swabbed the back of his neck with a hooked forefinger, adding: "If this leaks out, my goose is cooked. But I'm worse scared of a bad fire."

But the next morning early, when Bill explained to Corky what the city pole gang were doing, Corky looked pained and snorted:

"Hell, that's a one-way deal for the city, and us holding the sack. Skipper, you've been took, is what."

"I get three furnace heats a day. Two from our own engine, and one, for free, at night, from city power," retorted Bill shortly.

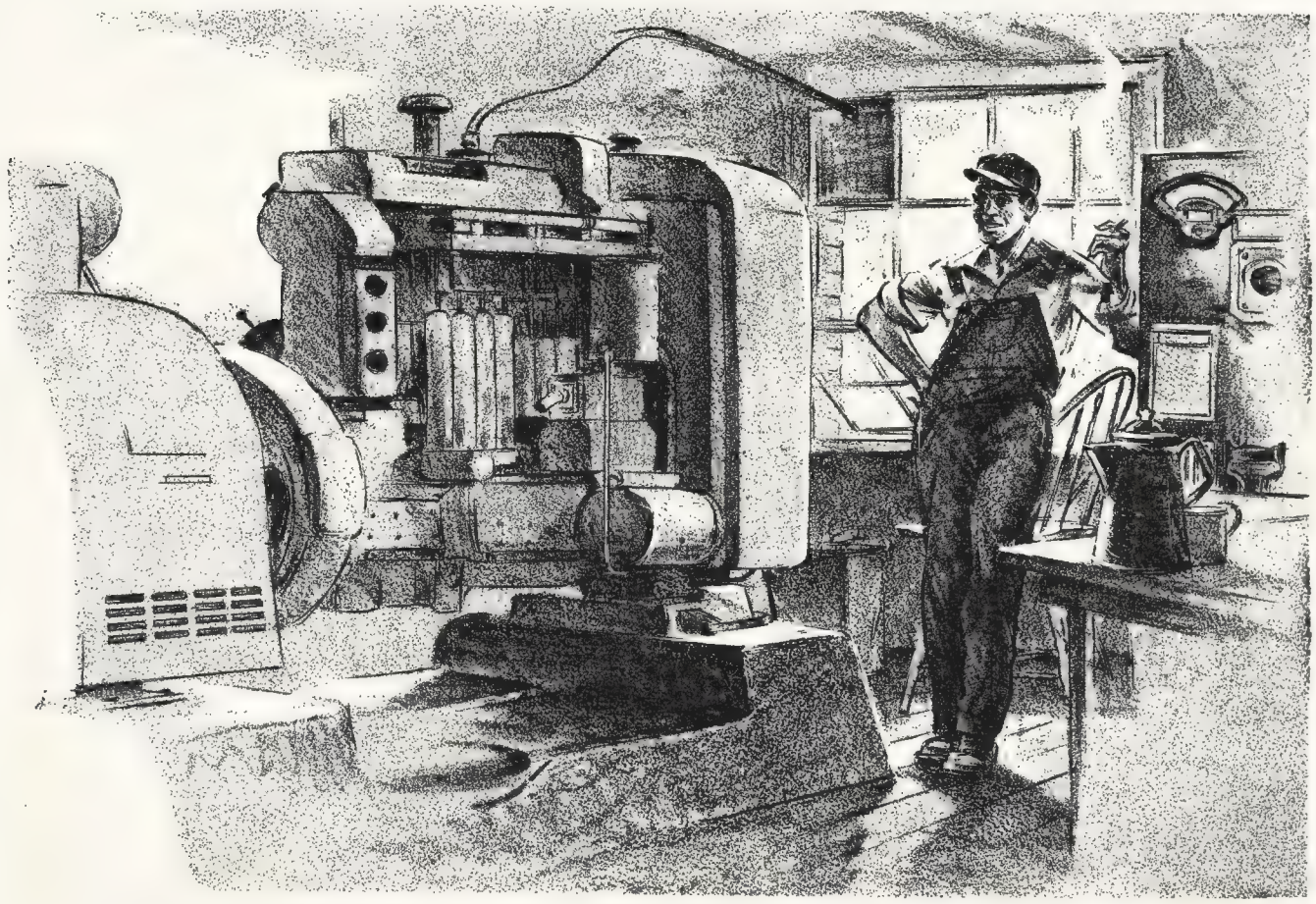
"While this hot weather lasts, we're gonna get only *two* heats, any way you figure," stated Corky flatly. "Because the insulation on them generator coils is burnt so brittle now, *one* heat a day is all I dare pull with it. . . . Say, when's that bigger generator you been dickering for coming?"

"Too late to do us any good, I'm afraid," answered Bill, and walked disconsolately back to his office.

At eleven, he called the Gram purchasing agent at Central City. Twenty thousand pounds of castings, delivered in sixty days, was the best he could do, he reported.

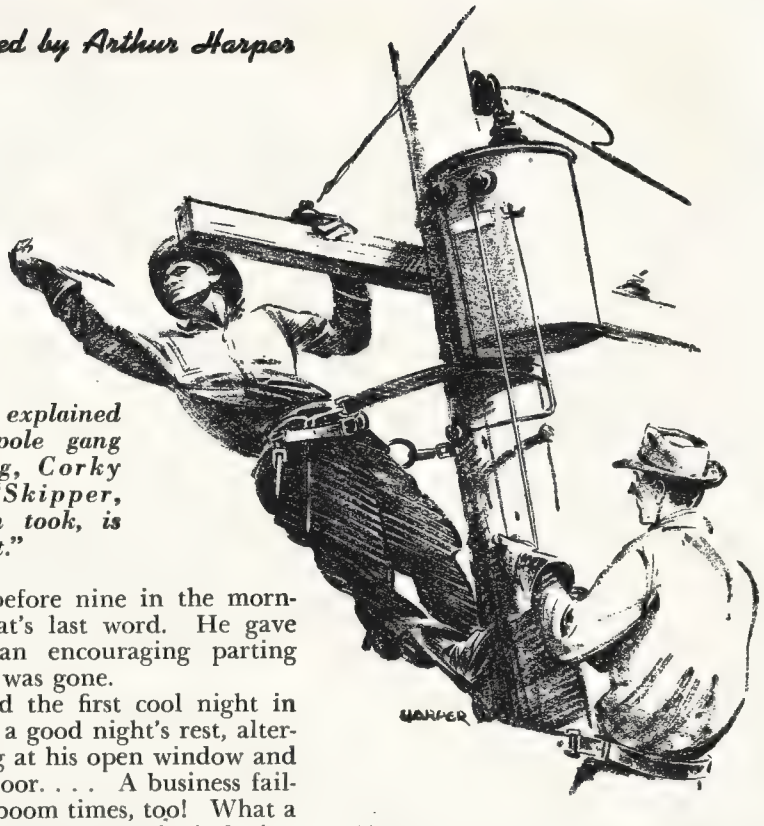
"Then your name gets rubbed off my buying list," said the purchasing agent. "As a matter of fact, I knew you couldn't make it, so I placed that tonnage yesterday afternoon. G'by!"

Counting up, Bill had just enough orders on the books to pour two heats a day for the next two weeks. And more than half of that was Gram Chemical business which might be canceled any day. The smart thing would be to get the Gram castings shipped before that happened.



Corky pulled the governor latch on his engine. He nodded curtly at it. "Nice doing, Little Joe."

Illustrated by Arthur Harper



When Bill explained what the pole gang were doing, Corky snorted: "Skipper, you've been took, is what."

But when Bill went out into the foundry and told Tim Curry of his plan to run a night heat on city power, Tim stared back at him bleakly:

"You're the boss. But don't count on me for help pouring off on the night trick. I can't take it, like when I was a young punk. And don't be bracing Adam about it, either. His woman is bedfast, and he has to be home nights to see after her."

Nevertheless, Bill tried pouring a night heat with the aid of a slow-witted helper. But something went wrong.

"It ain't as easy as it looks, pouring off," was Tim's comment the next morning.

SATURDAY, Bill checked production for the week. What profit Tim and Adam had made for him, pouring good heats on the day trick, he had more than offset by pouring defective castings at night. The net operating loss for the week was more than three hundred dollars.

Corky came in and said: "I promoted a gallon of insulation varnish from the light plant. High-heat-resisting stuff, they said it was. I'm going to soak the windings of the generator with it."

He shook the gallon can he was carrying, and glumly read the label. "I hope this'll dry in damp weather, because it's going to rain over Sunday, the radio says."

But no break came in the savagely hot weather until late Sunday night.

Bill and Pat Harrell had spent the day on Wildcat Creek, unsuccessfully fly-casting for bass, and were driving home in Bill's car about ten that night.

Bill said to Pat: "How would I go about getting a friendly receiver appointed for my foundry?"

Pat gave him a startled side glance.

"Bad as all that—or is it just the heat that's got you down?"

Bill told him, explaining that his working capital was gone, and that the bank was almost certain to demand payment on his notes due the following Wednesday.

"Then we'd better move fast," said Pat. "Drive me to my office. I'll draw up the papers tonight. I think I can work it so that Judge Kramm will appoint me as receiver. If we let the bank get their man in—who would be Gaxton, of course—you'll never see a slick dime of the six thousand bucks you put in the business."

"Shoot the works," said Bill gruffly.

A gust of wind buffeted the car, and almost simultaneously a hailstorm broke upon them.

"Look at 'em bouncing off the pavement!" exclaimed Bill. "Big as hazel nuts, some of 'em."

The storm lasted only a few minutes. But there was a teeth-rattling chill in the night air when Bill let Pat out at his law office.

"See me before nine in the morning," was Pat's last word. He gave Bill's arm an encouraging parting squeeze and was gone.

Bill wasted the first cool night in weeks to get a good night's rest, alternately sitting at his open window and pacing the floor. . . . A business failure—and in boom times, too! What a sucker he had been to overlook the important fact that Edgetsville was short of electrical power!

The sky in the east started growing pink. Bill looked at his watch; then held it to his ear. No, it was running, and it was only one minute after three. The sky was an angry red now.

Just then the ghostly wailing of the town fire siren started up. Almost as if half the population of Edgetsville had been sitting up waiting for the signal, windows started lighting up.

Bill looked out his window. Sparks were swirling skyward in the red glow. His foundry was on fire!

He ran downstairs to his car and drove out to the plant—pulling over to the curb, once, to allow Edgetsville's one full-time fire-fighting crew to go roaring by. The volunteer-manned hose wagon and small pumper would be along later.

When he crossed the railroad tracks and looked toward the scene of the fire, he scarcely knew whether to be glad—or sorry that he wasn't going to collect on his insurance policy. It was Gaxton's big empty factory that was burning.

Corky McCann's little car beat him into the plant driveway. Corky landed running; by the time Bill reached the engine-room, the Diesel was beginning to turn over, slowly—then faster.

Then came the second alarm from the town's fire siren.

"That's for us!" yelled Corky. "Here's where we go on the line to feed them high-pressure pumps!"

"Throw in the switch, why don't you?" yelled Bill.

"Keep your shirt on, Skipper," Corky stood with his hand on the switch controls, watching a revolving hand on one of his meters. "We gotta come on in step with the city's power."

With that, the chunky little ex-machinist mate jammed in the switch. The electric light over the switchboard began to grow dim.

"Number One pump coming on," said Corky, adjusting the electrical control on his generator to pick up the new load on the city power-line that was pulling down the voltage.

THE switchboard light began to grow dim again as the second high-pressure fire pump was started at the waterworks.

Corky increased the power output of his generator until the ammeter hand had swung clear across the scale.

"Still five volts low," he muttered, shaking his head. "That's more than we ever pulled making a heat." He turned and looked fixedly at Bill. "This is your doings, remember. If this load stays on much over an hour, this juice-mill is leaving this place like a skyrocket chasing its tail."

Corky laid his hand on the circuit-breaker handle:

"What do you say, Skipper? Old Chisel-nose can afford to lose that place across the tracks better'n you can afford to lose this engine."

Bill looked at the roaring flames consuming the sawdust shed just down the track from the concrete-block building which housed the big brother to Corky's Little Joe engine.

A gasping fireman, playing a feeble stream on the fire, yelled back over

his shoulder: "For God's sake, get some pressure on this line before I cook!"

"What do you say, Skipper?" repeated Corky.

Just then the limp hose in the hands of the fireman across the tracks stiffened as the emergency fire-pressure came on. A stream of water, rigid as an iron bar, battered a hole in the blazing sawdust shed.

Slowly, Bill took out his old pipe—the one that he had held clinched between his teeth in every shooting scrape his old subchaser had been in—and clamped his teeth on it, unlighted.

Corky grinned and said: "Okay, Skipper. When things get hot enough to light that dudeen without using a match, we'll be leaving."

Then he picked up the empty gallon can of varnish that he had applied to the charred insulation of the generator the day before. Pointing a finger at the label, he bumped the can against the generator's frame:

"It says here, *'For best results, bake until hard.'* Now *bake,* you son-of-a-sea-cook. *Bake!"*

BILL watched as two high-pressure hose streams bored into the mass of glowing embers—all that remained of the sawdust shed. The embers seemingly had less venom in their flaming tongues than they had fifteen minutes before. Or was it an hour? He had lost track of time. He had even forgotten that he was due to appear in court in a few hours and petition for a receiver.

Then a man staggered across the tracks—out of the welter of steam and smoke—and came to the window. The man was Elliot, the superintendent of the city water and light plant.

"How much longer can your little engine stay on the line?" he gasped between hacking coughs.

"Until the overload burns up the generator windings," answered Bill without taking his cold pipe from his teeth.

The superintendent gripped Bill's arm resting on the windowsill:

"Don't dump unless you start throwing fire from your windings. I got my main circuit-breakers tied down to keep them from blowing. If your help goes off the line, this whole end of town will go up in smoke."

The superintendent staggered on up the tracks toward his car. Then came a downpour of rain, with now and then a large hailstone thudding down on the roof above Bill's head.

"More hail," said Corky tersely. "But this time, 'stead of chasing them hoboes into the sawdust shed for shelter, it'll chase the crowd home, so's the firemen can have elbow-room."

Corky rolled a cigarette, lighted it and exhaled, luxuriatingly. "Yes, just as I told off old Chisel-nose, the other day," he continued. "It was a coupla hoboes that set the place afire, smoking in the sawdust shed. I seen 'em lamming it up the tracks when I pulled in here."

The downpour of rain had thoroughly wet the roof and walls of the main buildings by now. The scorched walls were giving off steam, but the danger of the fire spreading to the main buildings was over.

Bill suddenly found himself looking down through the open window at the smoke-blackened but still impassive face of the owner of the plant across the tracks—Gaxton.

Gaxton said: "Jim Elliot of the waterworks just told me it was your engine that is keeping the high-pressure pumps going."

"We're doing all we can," said Bill.

"That's all the angels can do, either, Mister," cracked Corky McCann.

"It was enough," said Gaxton, looking steadily into Bill's face. "I don't care to have the whole town gabbing about it, but I don't carry a dime of fire insurance on any of my property. Always carried my own risks, up to now."

There wasn't a trace of emotion or gratitude in Gaxton's eyes or his tone when he added: "From here on, young man, any time you need help, see me first."

IT was full daylight when Bill, who was making coffee for Corky and himself on a hot plate in his combination office and laboratory, answered the ringing telephone. It was Jim Elliot at the waterworks, telling him that the high-pressure pumps had been shut down and that Bill's engine wasn't needed any longer.

Bill carried a pot of coffee and the news back to Corky.

"Hell, I saw that happen on my voltmeter, when they cut off them pump motors," said Corky, and took a deep draught of coffee, straight, then added: "While that offer your pal Gaxton made is fresh on his mind, give him the word I'm moving in on his Big Joe Diesel, today, and get it ready to make juice. I just been over there, and the fire didn't touch it or the switchboard."

Corky pulled the governor latch on his engine and watched it coast to a standstill. He nodded curtly at it. "You was pitching in the big league, for once. Nice doing, Little Joe."

Just before nine, Bill walked into Pat Harrell's law office.

Pat greeted him with a wan but unsuppressed grin:

"Sorry, but I couldn't find time to work on your receivership petition, Bill. I was up all night at a hot party. I was the hero minding a wrench on a fire-plug. And scared to death every minute that the high pressure you were giving us was going to burst my line.

"Anyhow,"—Pat waved at his telephone,—"pick off the long-distance call from Central City that's been chasing you all over town. I'll fill in the happy details later."

It was the purchasing agent of the Gram Chemicals, who was calling Bill.

"Say, Bill," said his anxious voice, "I hope that big fire in your town last night didn't wipe out your foundry."

"What is this?" countered Bill. "The opening remarks of a crow-eating party?"

"Have a heart, Bill," begged Gram's purchasing agent. "The big foundry that I told you had beat your time just doesn't play in your league, I found out. They called this morning and said our specifications were too tough for them."

"You know this is going to cost you another five cents a pound, I suppose?" said Bill.

"How soon can you deliver the twenty thousand pounds you were willing to take?"

"I'm delivering *forty thousand pounds* in sixty days. But with that nickel boost in price, remember," replied Bill. "Now give me your order number. . . . Okay, I'll get busy. But don't bother me with calls for a few days. Got too much to do."

Bill hung up; and Pat said explosively: "By golly, Bill, if I hadn't been watching your lips, I would have sworn I was hearing old Gaxton putting the gaff to a fish that he had hooked, solid."

PAT'S phone rang again. This time it was Corky McCann, and sounding incredulously excited.

"Listen, Skipper, old Chisel-nose—excuse me, Mr. Gaxton! — is sitting right here beside me. He wants to know if it's all right with you if I run Big Joe for him. Says he's going to furnish juice for the city lines. . . . Here, you talk to old—I mean, Mr. Gaxton—himself."

Bill said: "That's all right with me, Gaxton. But we'll talk more about it when I see you in the directors' meeting at the bank, at ten. . . . Well, yes, I'll need a little extra time on my notes. But my important problem is financing another melting furnace. I've got to double my capacity at once. . . . No, I don't mind in the least telling you who the big order is from. Gram Chemicals. . . . Swell, I'll be seeing you at the bank."

As Bill hung up, Pat said: "Big Shot, how much eating-money is in your skivvies, this minute?"

Bill pulled two crumpled dollar-bills from his trouser pocket, and passed one over to Pat.

"Now I know this is real," sighed Pat. "Come on, let's chew some breakfast."

We Track *the* Tiger

A former Michigan district attorney detailed to the War Crimes Investigation in the Philippines describes the dramatic scene in which Yamashita admitted his guilt.

by ALF C. WATSON

Illustrated by John McDermott

THE sudden end of the war against Japan brought a flood of new duties and responsibilities to the War Crimes Investigating Detachment, United States Army Forces, Pacific. Based in Manila and pushing our work into every section of the Philippine Islands, one day we were a group of investigators and gatherers of evidence, with but few criminals in our custody. The next—almost overnight it seemed to us—the armies of Japan were in Allied hands and there were war criminals galore, some known and due for prompt prosecution, others unknown and needing to be sifted and searched out. When at about this same time we were selected for the job of prosecuting these criminals, we felt, for awhile, pretty well submerged.

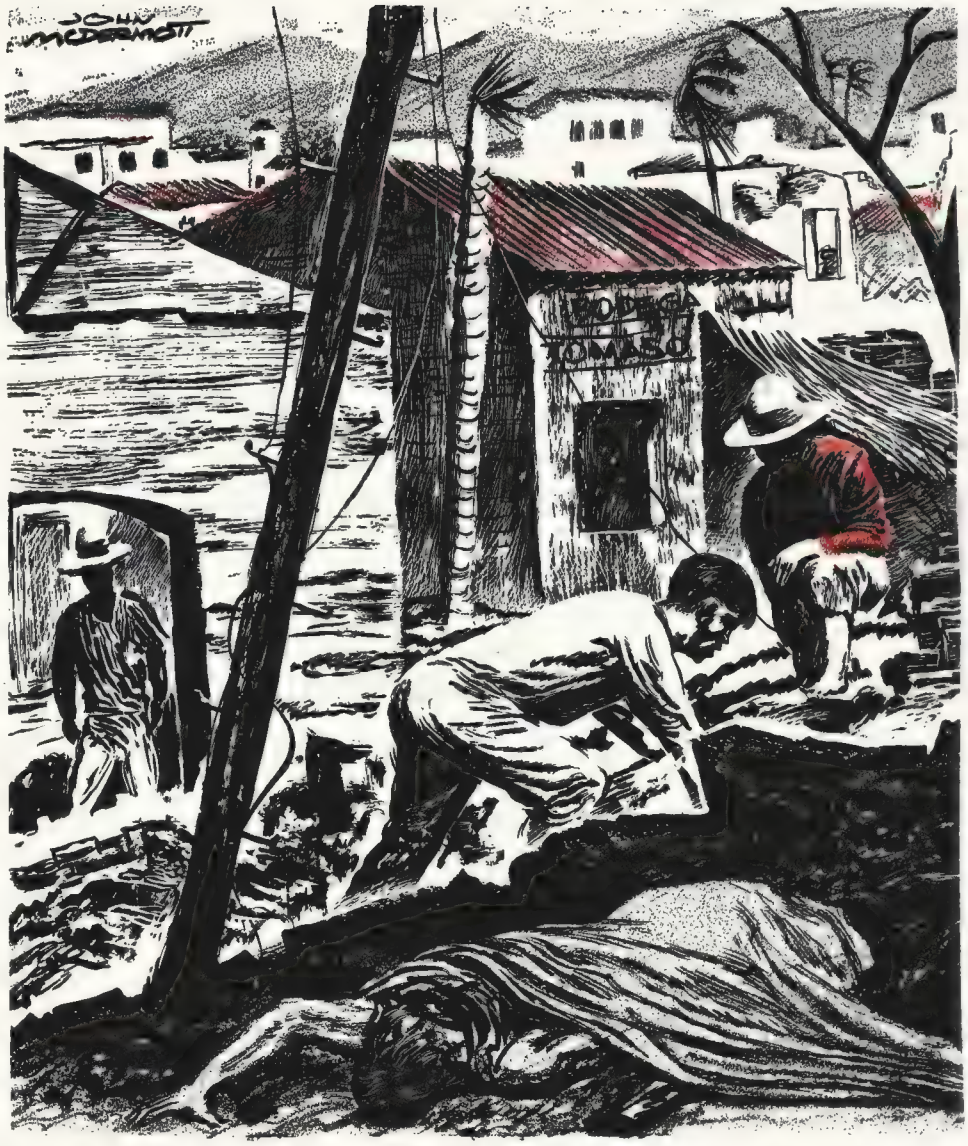
However, our Chief, Colonel Alva C. Carpenter of Fort Wayne, Indiana, refused to be stampeded. The core of his organization was some twenty-five soldier-lawyers, all graduates of the Judge Advocate General's School at Ann Arbor, Michigan. Carefully chosen for their professional skill to begin with, these men had been thoroughly schooled in War Crimes. Now, with months of actual experience behind them, they knew their business. Carpenter had every confidence in these men and felt they were better fitted to handle the myriad problems of prosecution than any other organization in the Pacific. So we heaved a sigh and worked harder.

On September 3, 1945, we learned that we had fallen heir to Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita and all his staff. They were to be quartered at New Bilibid Prison, some thirty-odd miles south of Manila. With them were several high-ranking Jap naval officers.

As soon as Yamashita's surrender appeared certain, I had been taken off regular assignment and put to work learning all I could about his career in the Philippines. When had he arrived? What had been his movements? Where had he stayed? What units had composed his command? Anything and everything I could gather, and proof to back up my findings. This mission led me to the files of the G-2 (Intelligence) Section, General Headquarters, in Manila, to conferences with the G-2 Section, Headquarters of the Sixth Army, in San Fernando and at last to the most valuable source of all, the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, otherwise known as ATIS. ATIS was the great reservoir and final resting-place of all captured documents. Here were diaries, maps, reports, orders and the like by the hundreds, carefully translated, analyzed and catalogued by experts.

At least as important to me as the documents themselves was the man whose duty it had been to read most of them, Captain Bernard B. Blazes. Blazes was young for a position of this responsibility, but he had a brilliant

Those of us who had interviewed dazed survivors, had little sympathy for any Jap.



and retentive mind. I believe he knew more about the Japanese forces in the Philippines—from the time of their original invasion—the unit names, the numbers, their duties, their leaders, their movements, than any other single man. He had become an expert on the subject of Yamashita. From his captured documents and from every other source open to him, he had made an intensive study of the man. His interest had not stopped with Yamashita's deeds in the Philippines. It had extended back to his doings in the Malayan campaign and at Singapore. From the moment I found Blazes, my investigation of Yamashita swung into high gear.

I HAD been working on this for about two weeks, when Colonel Carpenter called a conference. Yamashita was to be tried as a war criminal. The charge, in general, was to be failure to do his duty as a commander to control the actions of those under his command, this neglect having resulted in, or at the very least having permitted, a staggering mass of brutal atrocities and other violations of the Laws of War and Belligerent Occupation throughout the Philippine Islands.

General MacArthur had said that now that the actual fighting was over, the prosecution of war criminals carried a number-one priority. We would launch our prosecutions fast and keep them coming. From now on, time lost due to the needs of the defense in any case would be excused, but no delay on our part would be tolerated.

So Yamashita was to be Number One on our list. There has been a great deal said about Yamashita's having been a martyr. But those of us who had spent months working in the blood-soaked villages of the Philippines, sifting the debris of smashed Manila, uncovering the remains of hundreds of families or parts of families, interviewing still dazed and often mutilated survivors of Jap atrocities, or simply standing helpless and sick at heart before piles of charred bodies, had little enough sympathy for him or for any other Jap. Too many times I had found tears in my eyes as I talked with motherless children, with sad-eyed girls, or with old people with broken fingers and toes, the nails missing. These defenseless ones were civilians, not soldiers. The crimes against them had been deliberate, intentional, done for a variety of purposes, none of them decent in the eyes of civilized people anywhere.

I still feel, on looking back, that any Jap who took part in the original unprovoked attack upon the Philippines or who thereafter fought to retain the Japanese stranglehold there, was an accessory either before or after the fact to the wave of sadistic butchery with which the Japs enlivened the last hours of their short-lived, brutish mastery. I have not at hand the final figures on the number of civilians they manhandled, if indeed any final tabulation has ever proved possible, but the last figure I knew of is sufficient for me; around one hundred thousand victims, men, women and children, a large part of them dead. The great mass of those crimes had occurred during Yamashita's tenure in the Philippines, from October 9, 1944, to September 3, 1945. Orders from the top could have prevented them, *should* have prevented them! If he was supreme in command, his life, it seemed to me, was the smallest payment he could make on the debt he owed those people.

At any rate, this fine September morning we faced the task of trying Yamashita. It was to be our first War Crimes trial. There were many problems to be solved. In the first place, while everybody "knew" Yamashita had been the chief Jap commander in the Philippines from Leyte on, we "knew" it only from hearsay. Now, in a trial, we had to prove it. Though I was the lowest ranking person present at the conference, it being a gathering of the department heads and others of the highest responsibility in our organization, I had a voice in the proceedings considerably in advance of my rank. My two weeks' work on Yamashita had been designed to produce "an authority" on him. Secondly, as former Prosecuting Attorney of one of the Counties of Michigan, I had had more actual experience in building criminal cases than most of the others present.

We reviewed the evidence we had against Yamashita. Under the charge decided upon, all Japanese atrocities in the Philippines from October 9, 1944, to September 3, 1945, were his responsibility so long as they were perpetrated by persons under his command. The atrocity part of the case was in excellent shape. Our men had already uncovered and reduced to promptly usable form evidence of a

mountain of atrocities. We knew we could prove that nearly every Jap unit in the Islands had indulged itself in an orgy of brutality between those dates. Our investigation had revealed no attempts at restraint whatever.

Yes, we had plenty of proof of the reign of terror which had taken place, but the question remained: "What was the exact extent of Yamashita's command?"

Granted he was the *chief* Jap commander in the Philippines, was he the *only* supreme commander there? The fact that there might be, outside the Philippines, someone who could give orders to Yamashita would be no defense for him as to the crimes of any units he had the power to control. With the power to control went the responsibility to exercise it. But were there any elements of the Jap armed forces in the Philippines which had *never been* under his command? And here we struck a snag, a serious one.

The biggest, most widely publicized and best known of all the Jap atrocities was the wanton destruction of Manila and the mass-murder of a great part of its population. In the general rush of events at the time of the battle, and in a complete absence of specific information as to who was responsible, this crime had been laid by the world press at Yamashita's door.

There, so far as the public was concerned, it still rested. Even among our own armed forces it had heretofore been generally assumed that Yamashita had directed the defense of Manila. We had covered this so-called "rape" of Manila thoroughly, were ready with our proofs and desired, of course, to include it in the list of crimes committed by those under Yamashita's command. But my investigations had shown me that several persons in GHQ, Intelligence, believed that the defense of Manila had been conducted solely by the Jap Navy. Captain Blazes out at ATIS was ready with several documents to show it had been mainly if not exclusively a Navy affair, a Rear Admiral Iwabuchi in command. However, he had been smart enough to see a possibility that the Navy itself, Iwabuchi included, might have been under Yamashita's command throughout the battle. He was working on this right then.

We recalled a warning we had had of the existence of this blind spot. All during the summer months our Manila investigating teams had kept reporting green uniforms, helmets with anchors as insignia. "Navy," their witnesses kept saying. "Sailor troops." Here and there they had run into an Army uniform, but mostly it had been, "They were of the Navy." At the time, not expecting an early termination of the war, we had thought little about it and had just gone on digging. Now it was different. One officer present had been close to the surrender ceremonies at Baguio a few days before. He told us he had heard that Yamashita had demurred for some time at surrendering Naval troops. He had claimed that while he was commander of all the ground forces in the Philippines, he had no authority over the Navy.

Thus was something of a bombshell tossed into the conference. Feeling as we did, as everybody did, the case would seem lopsided, incomplete, without the rape of Manila. We did

not want to charge Yamashita with anything of which he was not guilty, but we certainly did not want just to forget about Manila if it was properly chargeable to him. Finally, however, we had to face the fact that as late as that very morning, September 17, 1945, no American known to us knew with certainty who, other than Iwabuchi (then believed to be dead), had held the command responsibility for the tragedy of Manila.

WE went over the various avenues of proof open to us. Then I said: "In building criminal cases, I used to question everyone who knew anything. I usually found that the person who knew most about the crime, the person whose statement came, ultimately, to be of the most importance, was the accused himself. Often we picked up leads from him that pointed the direction for all the rest of our investigation. But more important yet, the accused often took 'a position.' Once he did that, he either stuck to it, and we built our case to meet it, or he changed it, in which case he found himself in the position of a liar from the outset. Yamashita knows the answers to most of our questions. Let's go out and ask him."

This suggestion was adopted without argument and I was detailed by Colonel Carpenter to set up the interview and to conduct it. Major Robert M. Kerr, newly appointed Chief Prosecutor for the Yamashita case, was to accompany me and give such assistance as he saw fit.

Yamashita was by now at New Bilibid Prison. Since his surrender, he had been interviewed twice on other subjects. I looked up the man who had acted as interpreter for those interviews. He was Naval Lieutenant Samuel S. Stratton, ace linguist from ATIS. I found that, most fortunately for our purposes, in addition to being an expert interpreter, Stratton was smart, had a gracious manner and was extremely personable. From him I learned that Yamashita was in a cell block which surrounded a long, narrow rectangle. The rectangle was roofed and down its middle ran two long tables.

The Japs, some dozen Army officers and seven or eight Naval officers, had this entire cell block. They spent most of their time sitting at the tables playing games, reading or writing. What did they read? Well, they had copies of all the latest magazines from the States and our Army daily newspaper, the Pacific *Stars and Stripes*. I didn't like this at all, as one Stateside magazine just arrived had a story about Yamashita being the Number One Jap war criminal, slated for prompt trial and dispatch as such. He had his interpreter with him and if he was as smart as all my sources indicated, he would be sure to have digested all Stateside literature that was made available to him.

Things like this, of course, were but a part of the many problems we had to work out. Persons suspected of being war criminals should be in *our* hands pending trial; we should be able to control their movements, their reading-material and their visitors. We needed prisons of our own. We got some later on, the famous Sugamo Prison at Tokyo for one. But for this interview at least we would, like Yamashita, be "guests" in the Provost Marshal General's prison and we'd do the best we could.

Lieutenant Stratton suggested that since the interpreter in this interview might later be called as a witness to what was said, it might be well to use two interpreters. He recommended a Marine Captain, Griffith L. Moses, also of ATIS. Captain Moses was a linguist of much experience and success, who was later to become head of the Interrogation Center at Yokohama in Japan. He impressed me most favorably from the outset, and we arranged the interview for 1:30 P.M., September 20th.

The night before the interview, I was considerably on edge. I knew that most of the great events at that time crowding the front pages of the public press would make place soon for the trial of Yamashita. We would be out ahead of the European Theater, their trials having not yet started. This, then, would be the first big War Crimes trial to be held anywhere. With Yamashita as the leading character, it would catch the spotlight of public interest, and hold it for weeks. The world would expect, would demand, an airing of the rape of Manila. I felt the same way about it. Inside me was a deep-rooted feeling that Yamashita was responsible; that somewhere there must exist proof of it. Yet up to that time I had uncovered no such proof. Blazes was still scratching his head and muttering, "It's possible. It's possible. Let me search further."

It seemed to me that all this was a pretty heavy responsibility for a First Lieutenant. The responsibility was mine. Stratton and Moses were not members of our organization. Their main job was interpreting. Major Kerr, skillful, determined and thorough as his brilliant conduct of the trial later proved him, had but recently come to us from the infantry. Less than a week had elapsed since his appointment as Chief Prosecutor for the Yamashita trial and he had as yet had no chance to prepare himself thoroughly on the problems which existed in this part of the case.

If this interview should produce a clear, straightforward statement of the command set-up in the Philippines, and at Manila particularly, our work would be simplified immeasurably. Weeks of exhausting investigation would be saved, and the whole case could be presented more satisfactorily.

If, on the other hand, Yamashita made no statement whatever or cleverly misled us, we would have to start from scratch on that question of command and the whole truth about the responsibility for Manila might *never* be known.

So here was I, an average American, of "good Midwestern stock," about to engage in a duel with one of the most mature and wiliest minds of the Orient, Tomoyuki Yamashita, Tiger of Malaya, Conqueror of Singapore. Privately, and to myself, I summed it up and it didn't make sense. New Bilibid Prison in the Philippine Islands was a long, long way from the courthouse in Huron County, Michigan. It couldn't happen, not really; yet it *was* going to happen—tomorrow.

We met at the Administration Offices of New Bilibid and presented our credentials. Guards conducted us to the entrance to the cell block. At the door we paused for a last-minute conference. Stratton would introduce us and start some sort of conversation. Somewhere along the line, I would start asking questions. Stratton and Moses would interpret the questions and give us back the answers.

Just then there rang out behind us a piercing scream. We turned, thunderstruck, to find four fatigue-clad, sweating soldiers carrying a thick plank. On the plank lay a naked Jap. He was bound to the plank by a large rope, at feet, waist, arms and shoulders. His skin was as white as alabaster; he was so emaciated he looked more like a skeleton than anything living. His beady black eyes, staring from sunken sockets, were alight with madness. He alternately grinned and frowned. He kept rolling his head from side to side, every now and then letting out that unearthly cry. Just a Jap they had found an hour before, wandering lost, starved and crazed with malaria, in the hills above the prison—just one of hundreds of such poor devils; but somehow it added a touch of weirdness to the storybook venture on which we were embarked.

PULLING ourselves together, we entered the cell block. Down its center ran two tables. At the tables, in two long, parallel lines sat the Jap High Command in the Philippines. I noticed that the Navy sat by itself, a little apart, at the far table. I had heard there was little love lost between the Jap Army and Navy.

Closest to us and at the head of the first table, sat a corpulent old gentle-

man with a round face and a closely shaved head. He turned doorward at our entrance and, seeing Lieutenant Stratton, smiled and rose to greet him. This was Yamashita.

HE looked like his pictures, and yet there was something else, which the cameras had failed to catch. There was no hangdog, shifty-eyed timidity about Yamashita. He was relaxed and perfectly at ease. He was confident, assured to the point that he could and did affect docility! He spoke quietly, smiled softly. He gave his orders in an almost benevolent manner. But he exuded a confident expectation of complete and instant obedience. He reminded me of a portly old volcano, smoldering peacefully, benignly, on a summer's day. Give him his way, and there would be no trouble; cross him, and the earth might shake with his fury.

But he was on his good behavior today. Stratton presented us. We but nodded to the others; we did not shake hands. We seated ourselves, Yamashita at the table head, Moses at his left, Kerr next to Moses, Stratton at Yamashita's right, I next to Stratton. These gentlemen, said Stratton, nodding at Kerr and me, had wanted to meet and talk with the General. Captain Moses would help with the interpreting. The General bowed and made a gesture with his hands as if to say he was pleased. Stratton and Moses swung easily into conversation. Kerr and I looked about us and began adjusting ourselves to our surroundings.

Beyond us, stretching down the tables, was this strange line of little men. Most of them were playing games. Several shot sly glances up toward the head of the table. There was one game that looked to me like Chinese checkers. There were two or three card games and one which may have been mah-jongg. The room was very hot.

Sitting close next to me was a small man whose name, of course, I did not know. He was fanning himself with an ornate Japanese fan. Seeing my look of interest, he smiled politely, ingratiatingly, bobbed his head and handed the fan to me. I examined it, nodded approvingly and began to fan myself, using the stiff-armed sweep of the American cornbelt. This did not suit the Jap. He showed concern and lifted an admonishing hand. When I handed it back, he demonstrated the rapid wrist-flutter of Japan. I nodded my understanding, retook the fan and waved it his way. This seemed to please him greatly. I gave him back his fan and turned back toward the head of the table.

Yamashita had a magazine open before him, one stubby finger squarely on some item. He was talking to

I began to fan myself. This did not suit the Jap.

Stratton rapidly and earnestly. I was apprehensive, the more so when Stratton handed me the magazine and said, "Yamashita wants to know if this story is true. He is greatly concerned about it." I looked at the printed page. Sure enough, it was the story I'd been worried about.

Something had to be done, and fast, so I said, "Tell the General that this magazine is not an Army paper. It came from America. It was created there by civilians and was for consumption by civilians. Tell him his fate, whatever it is to be, will be decided not by civilian magazines in the United States but by the Army, and that whatever the Army decides, this story is neither official nor final." It wasn't good, but it was the best I could do in the time available. Stratton interpreted and the General nodded. He seemed satisfied with the explanation.

Stratton continued to look at me expectantly, so I took a deep breath and plunged. "Tell the General," I said, "that we of the American Army are greatly interested in the tactical side of the recent campaigns in Leyte and on Luzon." This information being conveyed to Yamashita, he smiled and bowed his head politely. I felt he was interested. "Tell him," I said, "that the Americans believe in the theory of unity of command, that is, that during a battle all arms—land, sea and air—should be under one head, subject to the orders of one man or of one group of men assembled in some common spot."

Yamashita listened intently and then spoke rapidly and forcefully. It appeared, on interpretation, that he agreed with this principle absolutely. "Tell him," I said, "that throughout the fighting in Leyte we seemed to observe a lack of unity between the air, land and sea forces of the Japanese and that we felt this lack was fatal. Tell him we would be happy to hear his views on that subject."

The General launched into a torrent of Japanese, freely punctuated with gestures. His interest now was unmistakable. I had figured he would go all-out on this one. We knew lack of unity had hurt the Japs at Leyte and the subject was bound to be one of great interest to a man with Yamashita's memories.

He said there was no unity of command at Leyte; that though he, as Ground Forces Commander, could control the movements of the land forces, he could insure coöperation of the Navy and of the Air only by the slow process of appealing through channels to higher authority outside the Philippines.

Here he stopped and clapped his hands. Two officers jumped up and rushed to his side. He spoke to them briefly in a low voice. They hurried off toward the cells and soon were back with pencils and paper. The General would, Moses said, draw us a diagram of the command situation as it had existed in the Leyte campaign. Yamashita began to draw, talking as he went along.

AT this point I felt a stream of cool air directed against one shoulder and the side of my head. I turned and saw that my new-found friend from Japan had taken to fanning me. A very considerate people, the Japanese! I smiled and said, "Thank you," in English. That did it—every three or four minutes for the rest of the afternoon, he would cool me off again.

Yamashita finished his drawing—with some pride, I thought. He explained it and handed it to me. I still have it. It seemed to me then—and still does now—that some day, when history-books have caught up with the heavy backlog of 1941-1945, my son will have in that drawing, a treasure like unto a freehand sketch made by Sitting Bull just after the battle of the Little Big Horn.

I nodded my understanding of his diagram and thanked him. He accepted the thanks with a great show of graciousness.

The next question was: "We are all agreed, then, that lack of unity of

command was fatal at Leyte. Did the General make any effort to correct this ruinous situation?" Yes, said the General, he had. "What had he done?" He had complained, he said, to Imperial General Headquarters at Tokyo; he pointed to it on his diagram.

I had a feeling of uneasiness, of unreality. Here we were, already on the brink of the $64 question, and everything was going smoothly—too smoothly, it seemed to me. Back home things had never come so easily! "Was his complaint heard in Tokyo and, if so, what different command arrangement was set up to operate during the coming battle for Luzon?" His complaint was heard, Yamashita said, but he was never granted the relief he sought. A new arrangement was made but there were only minor changes. "What was the new arrangement?" My ears fairly reached out for his answer. I had a sinking feeling that he might never make an answer; that I might awaken right then and that everything would have been a dream.

BUT it wasn't a dream and Yamashita said unhesitatingly: "The new arrangement was that from the moment U. S. Forces landed any place on Luzon, all Japanese anywhere on land were to be under his command when they were in actual contact or combat with the enemy."

I plunged on; we had to make sure we had it straight:

"Were the men in the planes in the sky under his command?" "No. As long as they were in the air, they were not under his command, but when the planes were on the ground and the crews were in contact with the enemy, they were under his command." "Were the men on the ships out in the water under his command?" "No. But when they left their ships, came on shore and became engaged in combat with the enemy, they came under his command."

I stopped to light a cigarette and get control of myself. I was shaking like a leaf and was having trouble with my breathing. So this was the command arrangement from the start of the battle for Luzon. Who would ever have thought of such a set-up? What American? It was typically Japanese. Truly the boys would have worked for weeks before they found the answer to this one, if they ever could have found it! He still couldn't control the movements of the ships or planes. All he could do was be supreme over all Japs who moved on land and were involved in combat.

"What happened," I finally asked, "when the contact was broken off, when the combat ended?" Command, he replied, reverted to the heads of their services. That was why, he said, he had not had authority to surrender the Navy troops at Baguio on September 3rd. The fighting had ceased then.

This was what we were after, what we had come to get. It had to be widened out, of course, tied down. I asked if this new command arrangement was limited only to Luzon from the time of the original American landing there or whether it extended to all the rest of the Philippine Islands. The system went into effect all over the Islands, said Yamashita. "And," he added surprisingly, "it was well understood by all Japanese everywhere."

I said we would like to go over it once more. "Were we to understand that he was Supreme Commander of all the Japanese Ground Forces in the Philippines from October of 1944 until the recent surrender?" He answered "Yes." "And was the personnel of the Japanese Air Bases in the Philippines under his command whenever they were on the ground?" Yes, he said, as long as they were in contact with the enemy.

I decided to give him one more chance, to put it squarely before him. We wanted the truth, whatever it was. If he had an out, let him give it now! "Was he," I asked, "the top commander of the units which had defended Manila, including the Navy personnel which made up most of the Japanese forces involved in that battle?"

Yamashita never batted an eye. Yes, he said, originally the Manila Naval Defense Force was set up by the Navy with Rear Admiral Iwabuchi in command, but those forces came under Yamashita's command as soon as they became involved in combat.

That settled it. I relaxed, glanced thankfully over at Kerr. My heart was beating so fast I couldn't have said another word to save me. Kerr smiled, nodded and took over. About how many Army and how many Navy troops, he wanted to know, defended Manila? Here Yamashita signaled to a Jap some distance down the table. The Jap brought his chair and sat down beside him. This, said Yamashita, was General Yokoyama, Commander of the Shimbu Group. They conferred together, Yamashita announcing at last that there were about two thousand Army and eight thousand Navy troops committed in the Manila area at the start of the battle on February 3rd. Only about a third of these had managed to escape to the east before MacArthur's trap snapped shut and the city was forever cut off. Thereafter, he said, almost no one escaped.

Kerr evidenced interest in their plans for the defense of Manila. Speaking jointly, they explained that the Navy had been set up along the harbor to defend against attack by sea. Troops had been placed to the southeast of the city and Yokoyama and his men had taken position in and around Fort McKinley to the east. A fourth body of troops was stationed at Marikina, to the northeast. They drew another diagram the better to show us this. It was a neat, orderly little sketch showing Manila, the harbor, the shoreline and the four defense groups mentioned. It looked good against attack from the west, south, east and northeast.

I aroused myself to ask what had gone wrong with the plan. Yamashita grabbed his pencil and drew an arrow coming down from Lingayen Gulf, from the north*west*, going inside the defenders at Marikina and Fort McKinley and cutting off the city. He then flipped the pencil on the table disgustedly, shrugged his shoulders, looked up, and said, with a rueful little smile, "MacArthur." What he meant was that the Americans had come from an unexpected quarter, slipped between the city and most of its guards and cut the Japs in two. The door at the south end of Manila had been closed by the parachute-landing of the 11th Airborne.

Yamashita and Yokoyama then picked up their pencils and began to describe the fighting which had followed. First one would make a mark, then the other. Between marks they conferred politely. It must have been that memories came flooding back upon them, for their pencils began to move fast, then faster. More and more excited became their talk. Their heads got closer and closer together. Their tongues raced. Their pencils flew.

The coast line dissolved, the bay became unrecognizable; finally Manila and all the surrounding country disappeared under a whirl of lines, curves and circles. Then abruptly they stopped and Yamashita laid the "map" before us. "This," he announced with dignity, "was the battle for Manila."

Then, noting what had happened to the neat original diagram, he had the good humor to smile.

WITH Yamashita in so talkative a mood anything could happen, so we stayed right with him. The Japs told us many important things, things theretofore known only to themselves. The chain of command during the battle for Manila, they said, had been Yamashita to Yokoyama to Iwabuchi. Yokoyama said he had received reports from Iwabuchi at various times during the battle and that he had passed on all these reports to Yamashita. The last communication he recalled having received from the Manila garrison came on about the eighteenth day of the battle, about February 20th. Such

messages as did get through, he said, were of a general nature only, such as that certain buildings were being burned or that much enemy artillery and mortar fire was being received in a particular area. Toward the last, he said, he received almost no information from Iwabuchi, only that they were having a hard time, and that they wanted to get out. He admitted ordering Iwabuchi to take under his command the elements of the Kobayashi Group (Army) still in Manila on February 3rd, the day Santo Tomas was liberated, but he claimed that once the battle started the only order he sent into Manila was an order for them to get out as best they could. Yamashita agreed that what Yokoyama said about having forwarded to him the reports received from Iwabuchi was correct.

ONE point that came up interested us greatly. Yokoyama said that at one time during the battle, Iwabuchi came through the lines and made his way to Fort McKinley, but he went back into Manila and died there with his men. I guess he did. We never found him.

This ended the formal part of the interview. Our work was done; "Mission accomplished." But Yamashita had some other things on his mind. He wanted to talk and talk he did. He grew expansive. He would not, he told us, tell us any untruths. He wanted us to understand that he had no fear of death and was completely indifferent to whatever fate might be in store for him. He was getting old now and had lived most of his life anyway. He was a Japanese General, a military man; he had never made any claim to being anything more. Now he was a defeated General and as such he had no standing in anyone's eyes, including his own. All this he said without a trace of sadness, only with an odd, resolute expression.

We tried to help him out by suggesting that once the battle for Luzon began he had received no help from Tokyo and had been virtually abandoned by his countrymen. He needed no comforting. He simply nodded and said that, while that was true, the fact remained that he had been defeated and in defeat he had failed his country and his Emperor. He had lost face, he said, and under normal circumstances he could have found release in hara-kiri. He told us he had devised a plan for death for himself and for all his men. He had withdrawn farther and farther into the mountains of northeastern Luzon, to a place where our planes and mechanized equipment could help us little. There, he said, sometime in September, he had intended to fall upon us in a last banzai attack, he and all his followers to die to the last man. He had intended to lead this attack with his own samurai sword.

I remember he paused here a moment and then, throwing us a queer little smile, he said, "And you would have found, gentlemen, that when it came to man against man, the Japanese would have given a good account of themselves." We did not doubt it.

Then he shrugged and said, "But that was not to be." The Emperor gave up the struggle in August and he was ordered to surrender himself and his men to the Americans. As a soldier, he had to obey orders, and he was obeying them. But he wanted us to understand that he did not desire to live any longer. I got a definite conviction that the sooner he was dead the better he would be pleased.

With Yamashita in so loquacious a mood, we could not resist going into a few matters of general interest. Had he, we asked, favored the launching of the war against America? No, he replied, because he had never believed a Japanese victory was possible. (A good practical reason, I submit, even if devoid of any moral considerations.) The High Command had planned a seizing and holding war, to last until America sued for peace. "Had Japan planned to invade America?"

He was a trifle contemptuous here. No, he said, Japan had never had enough ships, or enough material, or enough of anything to plan on invading America. "Had Japan intended to invade Australia?" No, he said again, there had never been any definite plan to do even that. Just take what was taken and hold onto it. That was why he had been against the war, had even worked against it. He had known it wouldn't be enough. He said his views had brought him into disfavor with those in power in Japan and that was why, even after his success in Malaya, he had been "banished" to an obscure post in Manchuria. They had pulled him out of there and thrown him into the Philippines only in a last-minute effort to save a desperate situation.

There was a rumor that after the American landing at Lingayen, Yamashita had flown to Tokyo for a secret conference. We asked if this was true. No, said Yamashita. He had never left the Philippines after his arrival there on October 9, 1944.

IT is never pleasant to leave the presence of a doomed man. And after this interview, I knew Yamashita was doomed. With the leads uncovered that afternoon, our men would know what to look for, where to look, whom to question. Blazes, if he hadn't solved the puzzle already, would fit it together quickly once we gave him the key, the queer, nonsensical, unworkable key. Yamashita would shoulder every crime his Ground Forces had committed. The rape of Manila would settle about him like a dreadful cloak and he would change before the eyes of the world from "the Tiger of Malaya" to a specter of evil, an arrogant, presumptuous, heedless, uncaring little man, a strutting Jap who, with a war-machine under his control, had nothing to show for his guidance but the shambles about him.

In a way, it seemed harsh to pile the whole weight of Jap inhumanity on the shoulders of any one man. Yet, under the law, that was right where it belonged. Responsibility starts with the commander. Unless command carries out its duty to control, there is no control. And that was the real cause of that catastrophe—no control. What had happened, was bound to happen.

SO retribution would start at the top, would work down to the bottom. Yamashita would come first. Yokoyama would follow soon. Probably every man in that cell block would be called forth to pay for his share in the total guilt. Then would come the parade of those who actually committed the atrocities, the perpetrators themselves. It would go on and on, for the crimes were many and terrible. It is still going on.

It is, I think, important that he opposed war against America only because he thought Japan could not win. It is important too, it seems to me, that, defeated, he wanted to die—the sooner the better. When we talked with him at New Bilibid, his mind was not on the slaughterhouse the Japanese had made of the Philippines, and I am sure it never had been. His mind was on the defeat of Japanese arms and aims, on his part in that defeat, on the fact that he had "failed" the Emperor, on his chance of retrieving his "honor" through hara-kiri. Every Jap I ever met was like that. The rights, the lives, of any non-Japanese were of no importance to them. Nothing mattered except supremacy for the Japanese. To many of them it was a matter of gods against humans. A smaller group, close to the top, thought less reverently but no less exclusively.

He was, he said, "a military man." Jap style, yes. But there is more to being a military man than winning battles, whatever the cost, for the Emperor. In affirming the death sentence of the Commission, General MacArthur referred to a duty Yamashita owed to his troops, to his country, to his enemy and to mankind, saying, "in failing all these, he failed utterly his soldier's faith."

Well, I couldn't say it better, and in my view, to have let him go unpunished, would have been the next worst thing to losing the war.

He bet with a lady; the race was between two river steamers; and the stakes were a thousand dollars against a kiss. But he hadn't figured on an attack by river pirates.

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

Mississippi

COLONEL PADGETT, gentleman gambler, stood at the rail of the *Orleans Belle* and watched the brown sweep of the Mississippi race backward into the light mist. He drew a deep breath against the press of the wind, and the sheer exhilaration born of speed drew laughter from his throat.

"It's a wonderful age, Bob," he said to the tall man at his side. "Imagine, only three days ago we were in Louisville." He pointed to the lights ahead. "There she lies—Dixie in all her glory."

Bob echoed the laughter, rolling a thin cigar into smoking softness with strong fingers. In the light of the swinging lanterns, his teeth showed white and even, his nose had the same aristocratic arch as his father's.

"You're a fraud, Colonel. You've lost a thousand-dollar bet to De Lesueur, and all you care about is that the *Orleans Belle* has cut eight hours off the downriver record."

"Bah!" Colonel Padget said placidly. "I'll win it back when the *Orleans Belle* and the *Diane* have their Louisville race." He smiled. "I figured the time too closely."

"You're a river-rat, Colonel; the world stops at the Mississippi's banks. Confess that the money doesn't mean a thing, just as I say."

Colonel Padgett shrugged, bracing his legs against the side thrust of the side-wheeler in the current. Beneath his tall hat, his hair was cotton-white against the color in his face from the cool breeze. An inch shorter than his son, he was broader, more solid with years; but there was the same eager thrust to his chin, and in his eyes lay the capacity to thrill to all things, as was in Bob's.

"Bah!" he said again. "I'd have paid twice that to ride this record run."

They watched the city's lights come nearer. Bonfires leaped in tongues of red and yellow toward the sky, and atop the knob a cannon bellowed discovery in a six-foot spurt of lurid flame, the sound of the single shot slow in coming, and then going by like a muted thunderclap.

"They've sighted us," the Colonel said.

Cries went up about the deck, cries and laughter and the sound of eager talk. For this was the maiden voyage of the *Orleans Belle;* she had broken every river record, despite a sprung boiler, and now her speed was dying away, the foam from her wheel-paddles less frothy, running wet now, as the engines slowed.

"She's a beauty," Colonel Padgett said, and leaned against the rail, looking back. "The *Diane* won't have a chance when they do race."

An awning spread back from the foredeck, dark against the moonlit sky. People stood on the walk above the roundhouse, some with glasses, others peering through the night with naked eyes at the spread of lights which marked New Orleans. A few of the crew were at the forward rail, jubilance in their tones as they talked and laid plans for off-hours ashore.

This was luxury on the river: Carved rails and panels of inlaid wood in the cabins and saloons. Soft-spoken stewards who anticipated every order, and food cooked to palate-tingling perfection in the huge galley. Staterooms more elegant than homes ashore, with thick feather beds inviting sleep, crimson bombazette curtains and mosquito bars, pier glasses the height of a man, and sofas and chairs enough for any party.

This was the Mississippi in 1838, when the Southern part of the United States lived by water, nourished by its trade. And this was the *Orleans Belle,* sister ship of the *Diane*—both queens of the river traffic.

Colonel Padgett sighed. He had traveled the Mississippi on a keelboat when first he had plied his trade. With his father, he had moved from town to town, his father's fine hands dealing cards with sure accuracy, while

"Oh, I've seen other bet contracts," Ruth said. "I don't think you can wriggle out of this one."

Gambling Man

the boy watched with eyes already touched by gambling keenness. As that boy, the Colonel had learned his arithmetic on tables of shifting odds. His letters had come from the Bible and sundry other books discovered where he stayed. Other than that, his education had been most informal.

But if his education had been informal, his experience had been wholly formal. At fifteen, when his father had died across a card-table, a deck of cards was completely natural to the boy's hands. And at twenty, he was as cold-nerved as any man on the river, calculating odds with quicksilver speed in his mind, even as his purse came open for any bet another man was rash enough to make.

Now, with most of his life behind, he looked back at the years of his existence and found them good. He had lived, and he had married, and now his tall son stood at his side, a credit to him anywhere, a tribute to the mother who slept eternally in the cemetery behind the church of The Lady of Our Miracle in New Orleans.

And so he sighed in deep content and watched the shoreline change as the *Orleans Belle* began her arc of flight into the dock at the foot of Tchoupitoulas Street.

"I wonder—" Bob said softly.

"Wonder what?" the Colonel asked. And then he smiled. "Don't worry, Bob," he said, "the city doesn't change; six years will make little difference to your memories."

"I suppose so," the younger man said indifferently. "But that isn't what I mean."

"Not—" Colonel Padgett frowned. "Then what's bothering you?"

"Ruth!"

"Ruth—Miss Cathcart."

"Yes, I wonder if she will be at the dock."

"And if she isn't?"

"Then I shall look for her."

The Colonel laughed softly. He knew the girl, knew her well. With hair the gold of pulled taffy, her eyes of soft blue and features as delicate as those of a cameo, she had captured his admiration as she had that of his son. He sighed ruefully at the memory. Yes, he knew her well; for at their first meeting, she had mulcted him of some five thousand dollars, every bit he had in the world.

"She does not like you," the Colonel said slyly.

Bob Padgett grinned boyishly. "She will," he said easily. "I intend to marry her before I return to St. Louis."

"Just like that!" the Colonel observed cynically.

"Just like that," Bob agreed. "I shall convince her that she has misjudged me, that I was attorney against her father's estate only because that is my profession. Surely, she is a reasonable woman by now."

"We shall see," the Colonel said, and laughter touched his heart.

RUTH CATHCART would be at the dock; for that matter, half of New Orleans would be there. Her eyes would spit sparks when she saw Bob and the Colonel. Stiffness would come to her back, and she would cut them dead. Yet she would steal surreptitious glances at the younger man, for despite her words, it was obvious that she was in love with Bob.

The affair amused the Colonel. She had called feud against him and Bob, had come to Dixie with the intention of retrieving the twenty thousand dollars she believed Bob had stolen for his client by legal trickery. She was in love, and she held a woman's pique, and from those conditions fireworks would explode in gaudy array when Bob met her and pleaded his case.

And so the Colonel laughed to himself, knowing what the inevitable outcome would be, but hoping that moment would not come too soon. He enjoyed matching wits with Ruth Cathcart; it was seldom a woman challenged a man, and there was a personal feeling in their meetings which he enjoyed.

Bob caught the smile on his father's face, and for a second he flushed. Then he grinned and turned to watch the *Orleans Belle* come swinging in to the dock.

"You're a fraud, Colonel. You lost a thousand-dollar bet; all you care is the downriver record has been cut."

The orchestra played, its music almost drowned by the scalding shrillness of the whistle. People shouted and cheered, and the rush of their cries spread like an enveloping crowd. Fires flamed at the dock; it was like a carnival or a charivari, strangers laughing and clapping backs, food hawked from traveling-carts and rickety booths, bawds working the crowd of merrymakers, and sedate business men standing to one side, calculating and talking, figuring what speeds such as these would do to the markets.

The *Orleans Belle* shuddered, caught and held by the reversed wheels. She lost way, sidling in, foam splashing high over her shrouded side-paddles. A rope was flung, and then another. Others whirled through the air, white hands and black catching and whipping them about the sturdy piles. Wood grated, and then the steamer was silent, rolling a bit, while gangplanks were run out and dropped into place.

"N'Orleans!" the Colonel whispered fondly. "God's gift to a weary world."

But when he looked about for comment, he saw he was alone. Bob had gone aft toward the passenger-plank, and even now was forcing his way through the crowd. The Colonel shook his head, and followed.

Caught up by the fever of the crowd, he felt excitement touch his mind. This was an event, for no other boat of the *Orleans Belle's* tonnage had ever made the downriver trip in so short a space of time.

He laughed, and the booming notes of his good humor brought smiles from other faces. Friends waved and called greetings, and he answered automatically, searching for his son.

He saw Bob's broad shoulders in the crowd, saw them plow a path toward a side-rail of the pier; and lifting his gaze, he saw that Ruth Cathcart stood there, remote and cool, undisturbed by the turmoil about her.

He hurried, not knowing what the girl and his son would have to say to one another. Bob had written letters outwardly resented by Ruth, but inwardly cherished. In her womanly pique, she might say things better left unsaid.

Colonel Padgett went through the crowd, going with agile grace, despite his size, and at last came to the rickety rail near which the girl stood, protected by a tier of cotton bales. There was an eddy here in the humanity, a backwash occupied only by Bob and herself.

"You are a cad, Mr. Padgett," she was saying to Bob when the Colonel arrived. "Only a boor would continue sending missives to a woman who feels about him as I do about you."

Bob was smiling, liking her, his gaze a soft caress she could not ignore and which sent hot color tiding into her cheeks. The Colonel chuckled and leaned against a cotton bale, compensating automatically against its tiered instability.

"And you are lovely, Miss Cathcart," Bob answered. "You are even lovelier than I remembered."

"You are rude." Her eyes would not look into his.

"I am in love."

"You are insane."

"About you!"

"I shall not listen." Yet she made no move to leave him at the rail.

"The past is dead; I but did my duty to my client."

The Colonel shrugged. He had heard enough. "What my son says is the truth, Miss Cathcart," he said mildly. "There is no need to carry the feud further."

She turned, seeing him for the first time. Anger came to her eyes, anger and reluctant liking for the river-gambler. Slowly and reluctantly, a smile touched her smooth lips.

"It seems so at times," she admitted.

"Then must it continue? We are civilized people, and as such we should

realize the folly of what we have been doing."

He felt the bale shift at his back, but gave it no heed for the moment. Ruth Cathcart was watching him, light from the strung lanterns giving soft beauty to her face, creating dark shadows in her eyes. Her dress was blue, a small bonnet perched on her blonde hair as though it would take wing at any moment. She was utterly feminine and desirable.

"You see, even the Colonel agrees," Bob said gently. "And yet he is a gambler who would rather feud with you than win the largest bet in the world."

The Colonel felt a prescience of danger. He felt the bale shift again at his weight, and glancing up, cold horror touched his heart. The top bale was falling with a slow ponderousness that nothing could stop. Five hundred pounds of raw cotton was leaning over, directly toward the girl.

HE acted instinctively, instantly coming forward, off-balance for a second. His hand lashed out, reaching to snatch the girl aside; in that split second of imbalance, his hand struck instead of caught, and the girl hurtled back, thrust with brutal strength.

She gasped, a small cry catching in her throat. She had not seen the toppling bale, and so it was as though he had struck her for no reason at all. She clutched for support, and her back struck the rail.

It held for one infinitesimal moment, then broke with a splintering sound. One second, she was outlined in the lanterns' glow; the next, she had disappeared over the dock's side.

The bale struck, driving thundering echoes, shaking the dock as though it were a hammer on a table. People turned in startled wonder. The Colonel caught his balance, swinging about.

"Quick!" Bob cried, tearing at his coat.

Below were sounds of splashing; below a voice cried out for help. In her voluminous clothes, Ruth Cathcart could struggle for only seconds before sinking.

The Colonel acted instinctively. He darted to one side, catching up the cotton gaff from atop a bale. He spun to the splintered railing, bending over. Then, as though he gaffed a fish, he swung the hook down, feeling it tangle in cloth.

"A hand," he snapped to Bob, and the other caught the handle and braced his weight.

She came up slowly, water splashing back. Cries of horror changed, laughter came slowly, then more thunderously from the crowd. Ruth Cathcart came up, bent double, twisting like a fish fighting for safety.

Then she was on the dock, gaff freed, water streaming, dress ruined, her perky hat gone from her head. She spat water, wrenching free of Bob's solicitous hands. Anger and humiliation were in her face.

She slapped the Colonel with all of her vital young strength. She was crying then, half in anger, half in shame at the laughter of those on the dock.

Then she turned and ran along the dock, forcing her way through the crowd. Bob made a move to follow, but was held back by the Colonel's hand.

"Let her go," Colonel Padgett said. "She thinks I pushed her out of anger, I suppose. Talk to her when she realizes the truth of my action."

"But—" the younger man began.

They saw the carriage turn, saw it swing about and leave the dock. One glimpse they had of Ruth Cathcart's face looking back; then the carriage was gone.

Voices lifted in queries, men came forward to inspect the damage. And standing with one arm over the shoulder of his son, Colonel Padgett felt laughter run in his mind.

He had done his part to bring the boy and girl together. He had done what he could, but fate had decided otherwise. Whether he liked it or not, he had a prescience that the feud had been reëstablished.

And thinking of that, knowing that Bob's plans would only be delayed for a time, he felt no sudden chagrin. He felt nothing at all but a sense of waiting. They would meet again in some gamble, this slim young woman and himself.

"Come," he said to Bob, "let's go home. I have a notion the Cathcarts are about to raid the Padgett stronghold again."

They were grinning then in perfect understanding, as they swung through the crowd to the carriage racks.

THIS was the Grand Prix, the finest gambling-hall in all the South. Rich tapestries of crimson and purple and blue and yellow and green lay on the walls. Carpets were deep upon the floor, and the click of wheels and the riffle of cards seemed muted in the opulence. Booths were at either side of the long room, catering to the hunger and thirst of the gamblers, and at the rear, upon a dais, a five-piece orchestra played softly hour after hour as though never needing rest.

Colonel Padgett sat at a gaming-table with a deck of cards in his strong fingers. He listened absently to Jacques Farquier speaking to Bob, his attention on the booth where Ruth Cathcart and her brothers served food on gleaming platters to the waiters who circulated among the tables.

"The bet seems sound enough, M'sieu' Bob," Farquier said. "The *Orleans Belle* should have little trouble in beating her sister craft. The Federal Government offers a five-hundred-dollar prize to the winner and a mail contract if the time is less than six days. According to the tests, the *Orleans Belle* should make the trip in much less than the time stipulated."

"Well, we'll soon know," the younger man admitted. "The race starts at nine tomorrow morning."

Colonel Padgett sighed. Somehow, he could not work up much interest in the race between the river giants. A week had passed since the *Orleans Belle* had docked on her downriver journey; in the passing days he had found no solution to Bob's problem.

Bob had had no luck in explaining to Ruth the events of the night she had been fished from the river. Although she knew the true story, she preferred not to acknowledge it. Short of a fight with her brothers, Bob could not even speak to her now. And because of that, the slow ready humor had left his eyes.

The Colonel laid the cards aside. His gaze swung over Jacques Farquier to Bob and past to the booth again. Ruth was there, trim and efficient, and his keen mind went over idea after idea to break down her reserve. And then, amusement sparkling in his bland eyes, he rose from his chair and paced solidly toward the booth.

"Good afternoon, Miss Cathcart," he said genially, and lifted a "Poor boy" sandwich from a platter.

"Colonel!" the girl acknowledged briefly and turned her back.

The Colonel smiled to himself, biting into the huge sandwich so stuffed with meat and relish and tart mustard sauce. There was awareness in the set of the girl's shoulders, as though she waited for him to speak.

"I suppose," he said, "that you will be at the dock to see the beginning of the race tomorrow?"

"I hardly see that it is any of your concern, Colonel," Ruth said evenly. "That is, unless you intend to push me into the river again."

The Colonel smiled openly. "That is a thought," he agreed.

RUTH spun about, color flooding her cheeks. Steam had curled the golden hair about her forehead, and she appeared to be much younger than she was. Her eyes snapped with irritation.

"You think it was funny. Half of N'Orleans thinks it was funny," she exploded. "And you call yourself a gentleman!"

"Oh, no," the Colonel said. "I am a gambler."

"Then go gamble."

The Colonel shrugged. "The others bore me," he admitted. "Therefore, I thought you might care to make a wager—for old times' sake."

"You—" Ruth Cathcart glared her scorn. "You know that I do not have money for gambling at this moment. I've used what I had to establish a home and this booth."

"Did I mention money?" the Colonel asked innocently.

"Well, no, but—"

"I was thinking of something else."

Caution came to the girl's eyes. "What sort of bet?" she asked.

"A thousand dollars against a kiss."

Her hand came up as though to slap the tall gambler. Anger and sudden hurt were in her eyes.

"How could you say such a thing, even jokingly?" she cried. "I am no swamp girl to whom you can make such talk:"

The Colonel finished the sandwich. "I did not mean it insultingly," he said carefully. "I meant only a straight bet. I think the *Orleans Belle* will beat the *Diane* in the race to Louisville. I will wager one thousand dollars that my judgment is right."

"Against a kiss?"

"Don't do it, Colonel," Bob's mocking voice said at the Colonel's back. "You're giving too great odds."

"Oh!" Ruth Cathcart drew herself up, eyes blazing. "Oh, how I hate you, Robert Padgett!"

"Tsk, tsk!" Bob said softly.

"All right," the girl said, "the bet is made." She nodded her head angrily. "But I'll dictate the terms; there will be no weaseling out of the bet when you lose."

"Terms?" the Colonel asked. "The bet seems very straightforward to me."

"How would you know?" Ruth Cathcart said. "Your son wins by trickery, which means that he learned from you." Her gaze cast about. "We'll make the bet legal and proper."

"Fair enough," the Colonel agreed, amusement lifting the corners of his mobile mouth.

The girl drew paper and pencil from beneath the counter, laying the paper on the scrubbed wood.

"A bit of help?" Bob offered.

"I am perfectly competent to draw up a bet, Mister Padgett," Ruth said icily, and Bob withdrew his outstretched hand.

SHE wrote for minutes, making a copy, reading and rereading the lines of script, before handing the pages to the Colonel.

"There," she said, "I think that will suffice."

The agreement read:

To Whom It May Concern: Be it known that a wager exists between Colonel Padgett and Miss Ruth Cathcart upon the outcome of a river race between the side-wheelers Orleans Belle *and* Diane, *the distance being the miles of river between New Orleans and Louisville.*

The first captain to arrive in Louisville shall be declared the winner of the race, and the loser of the wager above shall immediately pay to the other in this agreement the amount of said wager.

The wager, as agreed upon, is that: Should the captain of the Orleans Belle *arrive first in Louisville, then Miss Ruth Cathcart shall lose a wager of one kiss. If the captain of the* Diane *should arrive first in Louisville, then Colonel Padgett shall lose a wager of one thousand dollars.*

This wager is not voided if either boat does not finish the race, due to any cause.

Colonel Padgett laughed aloud in sheer delight. He passed the pages to his son who read them slowly.

"It seems a fine contract, Miss Cathcart," the Colonel said.

"Oh, I've seen other bet contracts," Ruth said. "I don't think you can wriggle out of this one."

"Fair enough," the Colonel agreed and retrieved the papers. He signed his name with a flourish, and then waited while the girl signed below his signature. Bob added his name as witness; and then each of the bettors retained one copy of the agreement.

"I hope you understand, Colonel," Ruth Cathcart said evenly, "that I do not intend to lose such a disgusting bet."

The Colonel bowed with slow grace. "I wish you all of the bad luck in the world," he said, smiling. "I am looking forward to the collecting of my winnings."

"Oh, you—" Ruth Cathcart began.

But the Colonel was already turning away. Bob was at his side, looking back for the moment.

"It's the silliest wager I've ever heard of," Bob said.

"Of course," the Colonel agreed. "But at least it is a bet." He grinned. "I've a hunch," he finished, "that Miss Ruth Cathcart will go to some lengths to win this race. Are you agreed?"

She came up slowly, water splashing back. Cries of horror changed, laughter came slowly, then more thunderously.

"Agreed!" Bob Padgett said.

And knowing that, they left the Grand Prix; while behind, Ruth stamped her small foot in vexation and wondered if ever any woman was so plagued. . . .

They lay in midriver, waiting for the starting-gun. Sleek craft, they were, two hundred feet long and ballasted at almost two hundred tons, they bulked against the skyline, dwarfing the river craft, the blacks' pirogues and rowboats skirting their overhang like waterbugs beneath great logs.

Bunting hung in graceful folds, red and blue and white, and from the bow of the *Diane* smoke and sound flashed as exuberant merrymakers fired Chinese noisemakers. Echoes swung back from the hills and trees, and smoke layered in the soft breeze from the long black stacks.

The *Diane* was stripped for the race, the awning gone, and the extra weight of beds and chairs and sofas and other impedimenta stored ashore. But the *Orleans Belle* was as she had been in her trip downriver, gay in her awning parasol, riding deeper in the water because of the freight and passengers she carried.

Colonel Padgett stood at the bow of the *Orleans Belle* and felt raw excitement touch his heart. This was his life, the only one he knew. There were those who said Mississippi mud ran in his veins instead of blood; there were those who knew that, deprived of gambling, the Colonel would have withered like a wind-sere plum. And because he knew himself, the Colonel was the first to admit that perhaps there was truth in both stories.

And so he watched the shore, seeing the crowds on the docks, liking the brazen music which drifted over the water. He could feel the shuddering of the side-wheeler beneath his feet; the *Orleans Belle* was crowding steam, waiting for the starting-gun.

A HUNDRED feet away, the *Diane* rocked lazily in the current. But few passengers were aboard. He could see Ruth Cathcart and her brothers. There was the Captain, talking to the swarthy, pock-faced Pierre De Lesueur, the gambler who had matched the Colonel's bet. There were a few others, mostly crew members.

The first blossom of smoke rode from the cannon, then sound whipped by in a single blast: The warning shot, the make-ready signal. Colonel Padgett watched the sudden activity aboard the *Diane,* as the captain raced to the wheelhouse.

One minute—two—and on the third the cannon roared again. Life came to the side-wheelers, life in a slow splashing from the wheels. Smoke boiled from the funnels, boiled and clouded the sky. Water whipped to froth; and then the steamers began to move, slowly at first, then faster, leaving the small boats behind.

Cries lifted from the docks, lifted and spread, handkerchiefs fluttering. Ponderously, yet gracefully, the twin craft gained speed, rushing against the muddy current. The Colonel checked his watch, gratified that the start had been exactly to the moment. Now there would be days and nights ahead of unceasing travel, without stops even for fuel—for rafts of four-foot logs were waiting up the river for towing and loading while in flight. Ten cords of wood was burned every twenty-four hours, and maybe more would be needed for this speed run.

The docks were creeping back now, but sound still came, muted and blurred, to push the boats on. Like toys pulled from twin strings, the *Orleans Belle* and the *Diane* raced side by side up the wide river, as they would do for hours, maybe days, before a distinct advantage came to one or the other.

The Colonel turned from the rail. The first glow of excitement was over; now there was only the waiting, until the town of Louisville came into sight. Then again would there be a thrill, as there always was when a wager was lost or won.

He went toward the saloon, glad that Captain Winkle had not stripped his boat as the captain of the *Diane* had done. He felt, as did Captain Winkle, that the *Orleans Belle* would ride better if deep in the river.

"A drink, Colonel?" Jacques Farquier asked from the bar, white teeth flashing in his dark Creole features.

"Sour," the Colonel said to the bartender and toed the rail. His gaze went about the room. "Where's Bob?"

Farquier laughed softly. "He has the Captain's glass," he explained. "He's making calf's eyes at Mam'selle Cathcart on the other boat."

Colonel Padgett grinned, saluting with his drink. "Youth is a wonderful thing, Jacques," he said. "Would that I had it again for a time."

He sighed, sipping at the drink. He could feel the surging of the *Orleans Belle,* and the power there touched him as something personal.

"I'm afraid De Lesueur has made a fool's bet," he said, and fumbled for a Spanish stogie. "I shall take great pleasure in relieving him of some of his money, particularly the thousand he won from me on the downriver trip."

Caution came to Farquier's face, and he crossed his fingers. "Don't brag too soon," he admonished. "You might tempt Lady Fate to turn her back on us."

"Bah!" said the Colonel. "You talk like a conjure worshiper." He put his empty glass aside. "Come," he finished, "let's join Bob and play 'bear' with the Captain's glass."

He was confident and tall, his keen face content, as he swung from the bar and went toward the door leading to the deck. And behind, Jacques Farquier shrugged ruefully before following the river gambler.

IT seemed in the passing days that the Colonel had been right. The *Orleans Belle* raced along the surface of the muddy Mississippi, every beat of the engine swinging the great paddle-wheels, driving the craft faster up the river than any boat had ever gone before. Natchez and Vicksburg, Lake Village and Helena fell behind. Memphis came into sight, late at night, and despite the hour, there were people on the river and standing on the docks to spur the racers onward.

The *Orleans Belle* was ahead—not much, but at least an hour, and in a race so evenly matched, an hour was the difference between victory and defeat. The new boiler held, apparently without strain, and the heat of the fires came through and touched the deck with a strange warmness. Stokers, dirty and tired and sweat-wrung, came on deck from time to time, throwing themselves flat, breathing the cool air in great lungfuls. Men exchanged places, doing jobs that were not their own, for this was a race, and to rivermen races were more important than eating or resting or doing only what they had hired on to do.

The river turned and twisted like a snake dead of convulsions. Sandbars lay where they had not been a week before, and huge scaly-fingered snags reached up to tear the guts from the racing boats. But the captain had ridden the river so long that he had a sixth sense about the water; he apparently could take the *Orleans Belle* where a pirogue could not travel.

There was rain on the fifth day, beating down torrentially, slashing against those foolhardy enough to stay on deck. Water lifted and battered against the riverboat, but the wheels never faltered, splashing their continuous rumble, driving the river queen steadily onward.

The storm ceased at sundown, with the sun reluctantly peering through knotted clouds for a few moments, tinting the sky purple and red and yellow, before sinking. Then night was come, and lanterns studded the decks and trailed yellow light through the windows. Far ahead, limned by the monster reflector lanterns, the river still surged a bit, white-toothed and silently vicious.

Colonel Padgett, standing in the roundhouse beside the captain, peered into the night ahead and felt satisfaction touching his heart.

Bellows of anger split the night. "Repel boarders!" the cry went up; then there was only battle,

"We'll break the record, Captain," he said cheerfully. "We should be there in several hours less than six days."

Captain Winkle shrugged, intent on the twisting river current. "I'm keeping my fingers crossed," he admitted, then grinned. "Still, you might be right."

"I'll bet a double-eagle I'm right," the Colonel said. "And I'll lay it against a single."

Captain Winkle swung his head, his bald pate gleaming in the soft light of the single shaded lantern.

"If you're willing to bet, then I don't want any," he said. "I know you and your reputation."

The Colonel smiled as he lighted a stogie. He flipped the sulphur stick into the gilded spittoon and leaned against the wall, quiet now.

He was at peace with the world. For a moment his mind went back to a time many years before, when he and his wife had ridden this river for the first time together. He had been young then, with hair as dark as his son's was now, and she had been as fair as a sunbeam, barely coming to his shoulder. Their happiness had been a tangible thing, built of understanding and a deep love destined to survive the coming years. Steamboat travel had been new, barely out of the embryonic stage, and his words had driven any fear from her heart.

"Think of it, Mary," he had said exultantly. "We're going almost three miles an hour, against the current! There isn't a keelboat in the world that can do one twentieth as well. I tell you, Mary, we're reached the peak of civilization; those who come after us will have trouble topping our deeds."

And because she loved this gambler who was so hard at a gambling-table and yet so soft in other ways and at other times, his wife had nodded, lifting her head high to steal a kiss. If she had feared the river, then from that day she did not show it.

Yet looking back, the Colonel wondered at his naïveté. By comparison, those old-time boats had been tubs, their luxury primitive, and their speed ridiculously slow. He wondered what she would say if she could see this spark-spouting river queen upon which he rode now. . . .

He caught the sudden tension in Captain Winkle's shoulders, and his reverie was gone. He peered ahead, wondering what had caused the sudden tautness.

each man for himself.

"Something wrong?" he asked.

Captain Winkle shook his head. "Thought I saw a fishing-boat," he said. "Didn't want to run it down."

"Oh!" Colonel Padgett said in relief.

The *Orleans Belle* was in the narrows now, threading its way through a channel not wide enough for two large boats. The whistle moaned eerily in the night, the captain tugging again and again at the whistle cord.

The lanterns' light bored ahead, cleaving a yellow path before the steamer. Foliage made impassable shadows at either side. Sandbars were silver streaks barely rising above the surface.

Then disaster struck.

One second, the *Orleans Belle* rode on in all her majesty. Her wheels churned water, and the wake was a spindrift of foamy spume. Then the steamer struck, rearing up and about, the current catching her almost broadside and forcing her back.

Wheels spun to straighten her; for a second she held. Something gave, and the *Orleans Belle* leaped ahead. Then the full current caught her, and sent her toward a sand spur.

Cries came from the deck, cries of alarm. Men raced to the rail, and the captain fought the huge spoked wheel. Colonel Padgett braced against the wall, feeling the first fleet touch of a sandbar on the keel.

"A chain!" a lookout cried, and his voice rose in sudden panic. *"Boarders!"*

Colonel Padgett did not wait. Piracy on the river was not unknown, even to ships almost as large as this. Already men were piling up from below-decks, and over the rail, evidently from small boats, came a horde of invaders.

THE Colonel plunged from the wheel-house, catching up a club as he ran. He slipped on the steps, caught his balance and dropped to the deck. Bellows of anger already split the night, and ahead he could see the marauders scaling the railing.

They were marked by white cloths on their arms, and he raced toward them, anger in his heart. He caught the first with a roundhouse swing, laying the man aside like a tenpin, and ducking the blow of a second.

"Repel boarders!" the cry went up; then there was only battle, each man for himself.

A blow caught the Colonel, spinning him about. He went to one knee, swinging his club in a vicious arc. Bone broke, and the attacker flopped to the deck, moaning. A man paused beside the Colonel, steadying him with one hand, then passed on: Bob, barehanded, making no sound.

Bob caught the first man, swinging him aloft and throwing him like a windmilling sack at two others near the rail. All three went over with surprised squawks, water splashing.

Then it was strike and strike again, taking time only to check for the armbands, then plunging and aiming brutal blows with lusty strength. The Colonel's club splintered and he threw it away. He knotted heavy fists, going in as he had so many years before on the flats and keelboats. He was a big man, and hard as nails, despite his years. When his blows landed, men went backward.

His coat ripped across his shoulders. A knife kissed his left arm with a mouth of flame. He broke the knife-user's arm and then clubbed him unconscious with sledging fists. A body smashed against his back, then rolled away, eyes staring blankly, head askew where a club had broken its neck.

The Colonel gasped for air. Only seconds had passed, and yet he could feel strength draining from his body. He rose to his feet, slashing away a bludgeoning fist, grateful when another came between him and his attacker. He caught his breath, looking about.

The battle was almost over; attackers were diving over the rail, harried by the crew. Four men were on the deck, one dead, the others stirring feebly. Anger was still a cloud over everything, and the crew stood at the rail, hurling clubs at swimmers, one man even diving in to finish a fight he felt had just begun.

The Colonel wiped his nose, surprised to find it bleeding. He could not remember the blow which had struck it. Looking down, he saw that his clothes were in rags.

"Good fight, eh, Colonel?" Bob said at his side, and sucked at a torn knuckle. "Damned fools tried to pirate us!"

"No," Jacques Farquier called from where he bent over a man, "it was not piracy; it was to make us lose the race."

"De Lesueur?" the Colonel snapped.

Farquier moved his keen knife a bit closer to the recumbent man's throat, and a hoarse swirl of words came in a terror-stricken tone.

"De Lesueur," Jacques Farquier agreed.

The Colonel turned slowly, watching the banks. Relief came to his heart. The *Orleans Belle* was gaining way again; Captain Winkle was pulling her into the channel. Behind, just at the first turn, came the lights of the *Diane*.

"CLOSE," Colonel Padgett said cheerfully. "But I think we'll make it."

He sighed, tugging at his torn clothing. He felt chagrined at having discounted De Lesueur. The gambler played to win, using any methods. But that he would try to wreck the *Orleans Belle* was beyond the Colonel's belief. Now, knowing what he did, righteous anger lifted light into his eyes. Crooked methods the Colonel could understand, but to wreck a craft such as this—well, somehow it was like sacrilege.

"She's catching up," Bob said, peering back at the *Diane*. "We've lost a lot of speed."

"She's all right," the lookout cried from forward, pulling up the rope-hung lantern. "Bruised, but not hurt otherwise."

A gun roared from shore, and men ducked the whistling ball. The attackers were having revenge for their defeat.

The paddle-beat increased; and the steamer leaped ahead.

"We'll make it," the Colonel said. Then the wheels went dead.

Illustrated by John Fulton

"Close," Colonel Padgett said cheerfully. "But I think we'll make it."

They stopped immediately, then churned backward a moment before coming to a final rest. Steam roared from below in a whistle-like blast, and from the stack came a rush of steam and sparks and whitish smoke. The *Orleans Belle* lost all way, caught in the grip of the surging current. She swung about, unmindful of the wheel and began dropping back down the river.

She gained speed. Then something caught the keel, caught and held it with dreadful patience. A tremor went through the hull, the grating vibration of wood sliding into sand. For a second the *Orleans Belle* went on, then she grounded, the current locking her into place.

"What the bloody hell!" Captain Winkle bellowed from the wheelhouse.

There was a commotion at the engine-room hatch. Swearing blistered the night; and then a man hurtled to the deck, hustled up and out by brutal hands. Before the man could rise, a second leaped onto the deck and dragged him erect.

"Dirty skunk!" he bellowed, and used his fist to knock the man down again.

"What the devil!" Colonel Padgett said in wonder.

"He damped the fire and blew the steam," the belligerent roared at the Captain. "I caught him just after the steam went out."

"Steam—out!" Captain Winkle's voice was hard. "You mean the fire's dead?"

"Deader than a mackerel!"

"How?"

"Buckets of water from the fire tub; I caught him just as he pulled the safety-valve and bled the tank."

Captain Winkle scurried down the steps, grabbing at the saboteur and jerking him into the lantern light.

"Who sent you—De Lesueur?" he roared. "By God, you'll talk, or I'll turn you over to the crew!"

"A lady give me fifty dollars for the job," the man sniveled. "Honest, Guv'nor, I didn't mean to hurt nobody."

"A lady—" Colonel Padgett swung about and paced to the far rail.

Already the *Diane* was in full sight. Sparks raced from her stack; water sloshed with a muted sound along the river. She was overhauling the *Orleans Belle* at full speed.

"How long to get those fires going?" he heard the Captain ask.

"An hour," the engineer answered. "We've got to pull the dirty muck, and build new fires. We've got to build steam."

Echoes piled from the river's side, echoes of the *Diane's* triumphant whistle blast. She was coming up now, surging ahead, heedless of the crowded channel. Voices lifted in query, shouts drifting across the narrowing space.

She did not stop. Men roared questions, and the *Orleans Belle's* crew shouted blasphemous answers. Then the *Diane* was going by, its wake wave thrusting at the grounded steamer.

Colonel Padgett stared at the slim silhouette of Ruth Cathcart in an open doorway. His hands were knotted about the rail. He liked to win, he bet to win, but he won honestly. Now, seeing the *Diane* race by, and remembering how De Lesueur and Ruth Cathcart, in their individual way, had fought to win the race, he wondered if he were wrong in his views.

He heard footsteps at his side. Bob and Jacques Farquier were there, the Creole with a crude bandage about his bruised forehead.

"We lose, m'sieurs," Farquier said darkly. "But I am afraid that De

Lesueur and I have another reckoning to settle, once I am ashore."

"And I wish to meet that young lady again," Colonel Padgett announced grimly.

Bob said nothing, leaning against the rail and watching the *Diane* disappear around the next bend. He was like his father then, hard-faced and quiescent. He turned at last, and his voice was but a slow sound in the night. Below, clamor arose as the crew began its dirty task of rekindling fires. The current sighed against the *Orleans Belle*, and the steamer rocked slowly, settling deeper against the sandbar.

And then Bob was through, staring into the night. "And that's the story," he finished.

Jacques Farquier laughed. "Like a bull by the tail," he said aloud.

The Colonel was already turning about. "Let's get ashore," he said. "I want to meet that little conniver when the *Diane* comes in. If we hurry, we can get a rig which will take us to Louisville in time."

Like faint laughter, mocking and insolent, the *Diane* blew a triumphant whistle. She was the winner; there would be no catching her now. She was the winner, and her rival squatted like a tired bird atop a nest of gritty sand.

NOW the celebration was over; Louisville had calmed a bit. The *Diane* had made the run from New Orleans to Louisville in the incredible time of five days, twenty-three hours and eighteen minutes. A champagne party was taking place aboard, speeches were being made, and the Federal man had already made the award of a mail contract and five hundred dollars in gleaming gold-pieces.

Colonel Padgett stood at the head of the gangplank, his keen eyes watching the merrymakers through the saloon window. He was neatly dressed, as always, but now he wore a small bandage across his upper lip where a blow had broken the skin.

"I'll wait forward," he said to Farquier. "Bring the girl there."

He went along the deck, stepping over a drunk, and followed by his son and Captain Winkle. Tiredness lay in him, for the buggy-ride had been tiresome hour after hour. But now, waiting for Ruth Cathcart to appear, he felt little of the weariness. He had a few words to speak to her, and he chose them carefully in his mind.

HE heard the quick footsteps on the deck; then she stood in the light, her eyes defiant.

"You wished to see me?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Cathcart," Colonel Padgett said. "First, I wish to admit that the *Diane* beat my boat."

"And you wish to pay your losses?"

"Perhaps. But first I would like to have you know that we caught the man you hired to throw buckets of water on the *Orleans Belle's* fire."

She said nothing; she was very still. Her gaze went from the Colonel to the Captain and then to Bob.

"And so you do not pay your debts?" she said softly.

"You think I should?"

She lifted her head, her face cameo perfect. "All's fair," she said. "There was nothing said about not winning in the way I did."

"Then you would accept payment of the wager, even though the winning was by trickery?"

"Most assuredly." Her tone was defiant, even though her glance suddenly wavered.

"Fair enough; that leaves me no alternative. Bob, read the contract."

Bob lifted his contract paper into the light. He read slowly, accenting each word, then hesitated when he was through.

"Is that the contract, Miss Cathcart?" the Colonel asked.

"Of course it is; don't think you can wriggle out of it."

The Colonel laughed softly. "Miss Cathcart," he said gently, "I will collect my wager now, as the contract terms specify."

"*You* collect—" Amazement came to the girl's face. "Colonel Padgett," she finished icily, "may I call to your attention that the *Diane* is at dock and that the *Orleans Belle* is not yet in sight!"

"Bob—" the Colonel said.

"According to this contract, Miss Cathcart," Bob said levelly, "nothing was said about which steamer came to dock first in Louisville. I offered legal training to aid you in drawing the contract, yet you chose to ignore my offer. According to your own words, duly written in this contract, the statement is: *'Should the Captain of the* Orleans Belle *arrive first in Louis—'*"

"This is preposterous!" Ruth Cathcart exploded.

"May I assure you, as a lawyer admitted to practice, that the contract is unbreakable and legal," Bob Padgett said coldly. "May I further assure you that I hold depositions from reputable citizens to the effect that Captain Winkle arrived in Louisville some two hours before the *Diane* docked. I am afraid, Miss Cathcart, that this situation would not have arisen had you not resorted to trickery, thus justifying my client's moves at this moment."

"I am the said client," Colonel Padgett said amusedly.

"But—" Ruth Cathcart began tremulously.

"I warn you for the last time, and these men are my witnesses," Bob said. "If you do not make payment now, then this matter shall be taken to public court for a hearing."

She stamped her foot, and her chin came up defiantly. "All right, you cad," she said to the Colonel. "I shall pay my wager."

The Colonel forced the smile from his face. He shook his head a trifle, unconsciously touching the bandage upon his lip.

"My legal representative will collect for me," he said. "Bob, you will see that payment is made; I appoint you my representative."

"But, Colonel—" Bob began.

"I will not submit—" Ruth Cathcart said.

"Payment in full—or court; you may have your choice," the Colonel said glacially, turning away. "Come, Captain."

He heard the sudden uproar from the saloon. Jacques Farquier had found De Lesueur.

THE Colonel was rolling up his sleeves, excitement touching his heart again. He walked faster, eyes searching the deck ahead. From the sound of it, the fight might become a wonderful brawl.

He stopped, looking back, and softness came to his eyes. They stood face to face, Bob bending a bit from his great height, Ruth small and dainty and rigid before him. Then their silhouette blurred, merged softly for a moment.

"Ruth!" Bob's whisper came drifting.

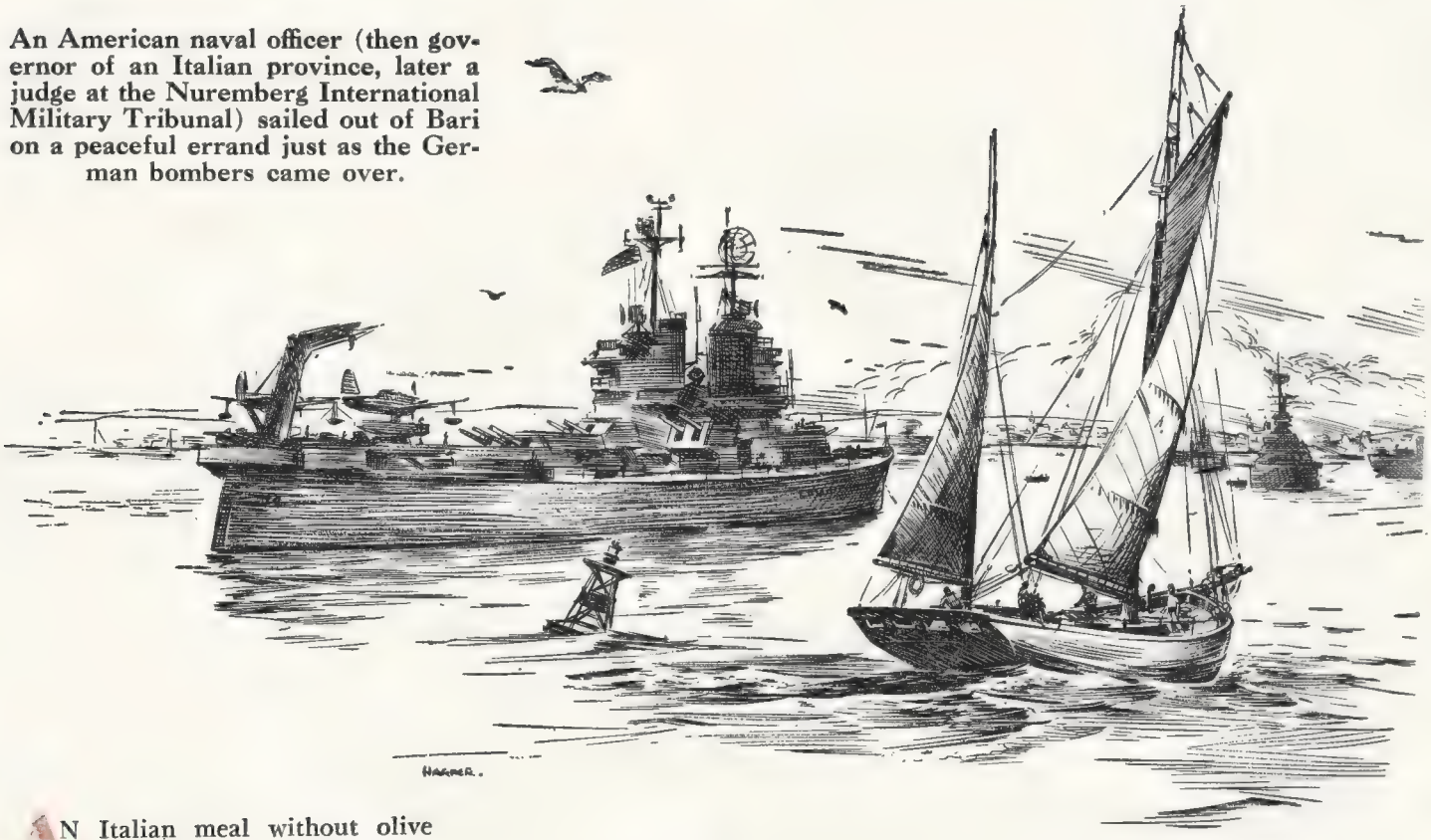
Her hands came up and about his shoulders. She was pliant and willing and without reserve. They were one shadow against the night.

"Fool kids!" the Colonel said to Captain Winkle and blew his nose.

Then because he was a riverman, a gambler who had just won a tricky bet, and a product of the keelboats where a good fight whetted a man's appetite, he raced toward the saloon.

"Ho!" his war-cry roared into the night; and knotting his fists, he dashed into the fray.

An American naval officer (then governor of an Italian province, later a judge at the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal) sailed out of Bari on a peaceful errand just as the German bombers came over.



AN Italian meal without olive oil is like a lamp without illumination. And yet, though the Sorrentine Peninsula is a green paradise of olive trees, there was not an olive to be plucked nor a drop of its crushed product to be found on the local legitimate market in the fall of 1943, shortly after Naples had fallen to us on the drive up from Salerno. On the Neapolitan black market, olive oil was selling at from three hundred to five hundred lire a liter. But farther south, around the heel of the boot, olive oil was plentiful and cheap.

I had been installed as military governor of the Sorrentine Peninsula, a territory which embraced about fifteen towns and a population of some two hundred thousand. My biggest problem was food. The area had suffered heavily from war damage and German destruction, looting and theft. Railroads and tramways had undergone such pounding by artillery and aircraft as to be out of use, so that products from the less stricken areas could not be moved; livestock had been slaughtered ruthlessly; electric power plants were out of commission. Some leafy vegetables were available in the Campana region, but without olive oil they were unpalatable and supplied but little nutriment.

It was about this time that Francesco Merefredo, a Ligurian merchant cut off from his home because of the war, came to me and said: "Why not take my schooner to Bari and fill it with olive oil?"

I felt a delicious drooling in my throat. A shipful of olive oil! This would set the bells ringing from Sorrento to Gragnano. A bottle of olive oil—a lamp with palatable illumination—on every table! It was wonderful! I grasped Merefredo's hand and shouted: "Of course! Of course! Let me see the ship."

"You can't see it now."

"Why?"

"It's at the bottom of the sea."

Since he did not laugh when he said this, I did not immediately consign him to the bottom of the ocean with his schooner, but with temper suspended awaited elucidation, which was at once forthcoming: When the Germans evacuated Castellammare, they sank every vessel in the port, from fishing smacks up to light cruisers; and with moist eyes Merefredo related how his own one-hundred-ton schooner slept with the rest of the sunken fleet in the port. "But I can raise it quickly," he said, "provided—"

"Provided what?"

"Provided you guarantee she will not be requisitioned, and you will become her skipper for the trip."

"What is her name?"

"The *Inaffondabile*."

Now I did laugh. I thought he was joking, but in all verity that was the name which appeared on the prow when, like a melancholy gigantic porpoise, it came to the surface with green moss shining through the water cascading from her decks. After she had been towed ashore and I saw that she could be made seaworthy, I said that before I would captain the voyage, he had to accept three conditions: one, that the selling price of the olive oil when we returned would be fixed by a committee made up of the mayors of the Peninsula and the economic representatives of the Allied Military Government; two, that I was to approve the crew he should select; and three, that the name of the craft was to be changed. Merefredo accepted, but balked on the last condition. I, however, insisted that a ship that had already sunk could not be called *Inaffondabile*—the Unsinkable! It might bring hard luck.

We set to work at once. We repaired the hull, calked the seams, erected the masts, installed a 125-horsepower Diesel engine which had been previously removed and concealed by the Germans but found by Merefredo, and christened the craft *Monitor and Merrimac!*

THE Isle of Capri was a seething conflagration of lilac blooms in a sapphire sea as we headed south, the setting sun turning the prow of our proud little resurrected ship into pure gold and the humming mainmast into burnished copper. In addition to Francesco Merefredo, I had a crew of three: Lieutenant Giuseppe Barcelli, Giovanni Catella and Fabiano Menorisini, all of whose hearts merrily rocked with the gladsome craft as we visualized the furore which would greet us when we should return loaded with our liquid treasure.

Not an untoward incident marred the smoothness of our journey down the western coast, through the Straits

The Blasting of Bari

Illustrated by Arthur Harper

by CAPTAIN MICHAEL A. MUSMANNO, USNR

of Messina and then northward to Brindisi and Bari. For the few hours that I slept, I held tightly in my hand the felicity of anticipated achievement—colored, spiced and flavored with adventure—though I had no idea of the extent of the coming adventure.

We stood into the enchanting harbor of Bari at eight in the morning of December 2nd, the skyline of church cupolas, cathedral towers and castle turrets recreating in my eyes the Grand Canal of Venice, while the stunning white stone buildings along the shore, one holding aloft a graceful clock tower, seemed to be bathing in the translucent waters which reflected their rippling images.

The city has two harbors, one old and one new. Porto Nuovo, all business and bustle, was jammed full of large merchant vessels like locomotives in a railroad yard. Porto Vecchio, or the old port, might have been a body of water devoted entirely to pleasure. Small sailing-boats rode merrily in the ultramarine bay; larger craft with extended masts holding furled sails might have been ships from a picturesque age before the smoke of a steam engine ever curled above a swaying deck. However, some low-lying craft with bladelike prows, slanting smokestacks, and projecting pencils that could write death at many miles' distance, added a different aspect to the scene.

Still, peace rather than war, beauty rather than business, dominated Porto Vecchio as we glided gently in and warped at a point approximately the inner elbow of the arm of the mole, half-enclosing the bay. One always steps ashore from a ship, no matter how long or short the voyage, with a certain swagger, ever conscious of the accomplishment of bringing one's ship in. Perhaps my swagger was a little accentuated that morning of December 2nd because the waters gently lapping at the shores may have whispered that this was the last time I would take that ship into port. But I was not conscious of any premonition of evil things to come; on the contrary, my spirits were high. During the loading of the cargo I wrote several letters; and when later I took them to the Army post office, Captain Ralph Englesby, whom I had known in Naples, said: "Hey, there, Musmanno, why so downhearted?" I could not understand his observation, since I was unaware of any mood other than a contented one. . . .

Twilight had set in; a few stars were attending upon a rather indifferent moon which only revealed a splinter of itself. There was even a slight suggestion of rain, but not enough to warrant any preparation for a fall of water from the skies when at approximately seven o'clock we cleared Molo Sant' Antonio and stood out to open sea. For a December night it was not cold, although the blue scarf I had wrapped about my neck felt very comforting. Merefredo was caroling hosannahs of joy. We had loaded three hundred quintals of olive oil, and the large vats occupied the entire deck space. We were all pleased: the most difficult part of the journey was accomplished; the green-gold fluid had been obtained for a song, thirty lire a liter, and it was now musically clucking in the barrels as our craft slowly rolled into the gentle Adriatic swell.

YET we were silent as we watched the shoreline become a thin thread dividing two oceans of shadow. Suddenly I felt a sharp pain in my stomach. I remembered I had had no supper, so I ate several bars of chocolate which I carried in my musette bag. As I stood with one hand gripping the helm, my lungs tingling to the ocean breeze, a soft, irregular, fluttering substance brushed my face. I snatched savagely at it, apprehending it to be some large flying bug. Holding the unknown object tightly in my fist, I turned the beam of my flashlight upon it. I laughed. It was a piece of tinfoil which had enclosed the chocolate bars, although I vaguely wondered how the breeze could have lifted it from the deck and blown it fore, since the wind was traveling aft. Then came another bit of tinsel, this time a very long strip of it, at least two feet, which certainly and especially in wartime could not have been used in wrapping candy. I glanced about and presently saw the silvery ribbon descending in many strips and all about me, as if falling from a dismantled Christmas tree. The men nervously groped forward to show me handfuls they had gathered of the same mysterious substance.

"Fermate macchine! Stop the engines!" I exclaimed with all the intensity of a shout, but in the subdued volume of an apprehensive whisper. Menorisini, who was attending the engine, responded instantaneously, and the chugging of the machinery with the swish of the propeller died away into the awful stillness of the night. *"Che cosa e'?* What is it?" they questioned; but their query was quickly answered when they saw me fling myself over an oil cask and flatten myself as much as the convexity permitted. With a muffled cry of alarm they dropped to the deck, and then in a low voice I explained to them that the tinsel paper came from enemy planes, that it was "window," designed to interrupt the functioning of radar.

Just as I was about to observe that probably I had erred, for we heard no sound save the soft lapping of the uncomplaining water against the sides of the *Monitor and Merrimac,* the darkness disappeared in a frightening flash; it vanished with the speed, in reverse, of a light smashed out. Were it not that the ensuing blinding illumination portended an immediate storm of exploding and death-dealing bombs, one could have stopped to admire it. If you can imagine a chandelier so large and effective that it makes a ballroom of the ocean, you can gain some idea of those three par-

With a muffled cry of alarm, they dropped to the deck, and then I explained to them that the tinsel paper came from enemy planes.

achute flares suddenly dropped from above. They not only lit up Bari port to a midday incandescence, and illuminated the boulevard along the sea like New York's Great White Way, but they were beautiful; they threw off a soft blue incandescence which made a show window of the port, each ship an attractive toy boat ready to be taken home by an admiring parent to his boy. These comparisons, most assuredly, formed at a later day, and not as the parachutes unfolded their silver cloaks and released the bats of death which now went shrieking toward their objectives, the fleets of ships in Porto Nuovo, ships now so obvious that they could not have been more brilliant targets if they had bull's-eyes traced on them in electric lights.

The planes roared over us with utter unconcern, but Lieutenant Barcelli leaped to the cabin for a Tommy-gun. In a second I also had one in my hand. However, I was either too frightened or too awed to shoot, or perhaps I realized it was waste of ammunition to fire at these lightning flying dots several thousand feet above us; we might need the ammunition for a more certain target. Barcelli, however, had no thought of waiting. He had a gun in his grasp, and it was loaded. He had fought Germans before when he had no ammunition; this was an opportunity that should not be lost, and so leaden pellets went whizzing up at the giant vultures. Perhaps I was mistaken, but it appeared to me that the last plane (there were twenty or thirty in all) wavered just a bit in its heavy drive forward as if the pilot had for a moment been distracted by something. Barcelli shouted: "I nipped that one!"

Although the planes had apparently slipped in unnoticed, the circumference of the port now howled, screamed and shrilled with an inverted cascade of fire. Tilted nozzles of machine-guns screeched at the invaders; uplifted muzzles of cannon belched red and yellow streams of defiance. Over this blazing caterwauling and ear-tearing bedlam came the heavy booming detonations of the bombs. As if each pilot knew his victim, the planes plunged headlong at individual ships and ripped them apart with lances of fire. The tracer bullets of the anti-aircraft guns formed crazy aërial snakes twisting and squirming as they sought to follow the diving, darting, zooming aggressors dropping their sky-shaking explosions with the ease of a circus merchant scattering toy balloons. A smoke-screen, which resembled a miasmatic fog, struggled upward to blanket the harbor, but this was like trying to conceal a giant with a handkerchief.

A SECOND wave of planes now bent to an attack on the city itself, hurling burning chunks of hell into the thickly populated areas. I felt my skin crawling and blood running cold. How much of this could my senses stand? On the right, ships flamed and burst; off to the left the dismembered fragments of buildings flying upward traced the course of the Nazi terrorists. One knew, of course, that in the depths of all these raging explosions and fires were human beings. When a ship burst into a million splinters of flame, the men aboard could resist no more than the steel plates, which in that diabolic violence were shredded like tissue paper. When buildings were chopped to pieces with the axes of dynamite and nitro-glycerin wielded

from above, men, women and children were treated in the same manner. It was horrible to think about. Saying it was war made it no less horrible.

These frightful images seared through me as I stood frozen at the rail of the *Monitor and Merrimac* watching what scientists might compare to the violence attendant upon the birth of the earth, but which seemed to me more like the ending of the world. Dazed with the incredible horror of what I was witnessing, I forgot for the moment that I myself was a participant in the war, and that I was a member of the armed forces. To myself I seemed a viewer of a spectacle which must at last consume even the spectator. Presently the roaring bombers were over us again, their propellers furiously whirring like burning swastikas bearing the black death-wings in the direction of the Albanian coast, whence they had most probably come. Bari was wrecked and ruined; its port was a shambles of sunk and sinking ships; the city would take years to recover from the blows it had received; it was aflame with heart-choking disaster.

MY horror and wrath at the destruction these sky-riding Nazis had wrought was displaced in that instant by my supreme relief in their departure; they had done their worst, they had finished off the Queen of the Adriatic, but they were at last on their way out—and a rill of joy danced through my veins. Despite the long sweep of their mortal scythes, I was alive. Mass extermination had taken place, but I had escaped. In retrospect I am a little ashamed that at that moment I gave no thought to the others who had not been spared. In this mortification, however, I confess only to a human weakness. I know many who have expressed the same sentiment.

But I recollect also the hatred I flung upward at the disappearing executioners. I loathed their insufferable complacency, their strutting flight; their very propellers seemed to goose-step through the air. Of the twenty-five or thirty in the invasion, only one was lost. At any rate Fabiano said he saw one fall in a tangle of yellow smoke into the port. I myself did not see it. A later report had it that the only plane which had been hit crashed on a ship, with the result that its unreleased bomb then exploded and sank the vessel. Thus fate turned a lucky hit into disaster.

Though the flares had burned themselves out, the fiery glow from the flaming ships in Porto Nuovo lit up all the adjacent waters like an open furnace. Silhouetted against the sky the black moths sped away. One lingered behind. It seemed wounded, and I exulted in the anticipation of seeing it plunge in a cloud of steam and fire to the bottom of the sea. It began to plummet, its nose pointed downward; it was falling swiftly toward our ship. Fabiano said coldly: "I think he's after us." Barcelli threw a Tommy-gun to his shoulder, muttering: "I'm sure it's the same pirate I nipped going into port," and opened fire. The diving bomber had now started his machine-guns. Fingers of water danced around our ship as the leaden shower fell. I could imagine the grinning faces of the crew, and I could almost hear the pilot relating at his home base, amid the laughing shouts of his companions, how as their final gesture they strafed and sank a fishing boat that had had the temerity to shoot at them.

Down it cannonballed, its nose belching fire, the blast of its engines fulminating above the rocketing thunder of the bursting ships, the clang and clatter of the ack-ack guns and the boom of the antiaircraft artillery. Barcelli continued to shoot, cursing the while; Fabiano fell to the deck with a bullet in his leg; Catella leaped overboard; Merefredo spread himself out as widely as he could over his treasure. I snatched up a Tommy-gun; then I decided to follow Catella, but in patches close to our craft the water was ablaze. In this moment of indecision, the *coup de grace* was upon us. The deck of the *Monitor and Merrimac* disappeared from under my feet; so did the bulwarks about me; in fact, there was no ship at all, and I had the same sensation I felt as a boy doing a somersault into the river. Sky, ocean, smoke, all in one whirling kaleidoscopic bewilderment, and then a greenish liquid closed over me.

I was under water. Pounding hard with open hands, I rose to the surface, trying desperately to kick off my shoes. The air vibrated with the diminishing roar of the dive bomber, but the plane itself was not visible. I expected to be choking from salt water. Instead I tasted a pleasant something in my throat. As I madly splashed toward a floating timber and frenziedly embraced it, my inquiring tongue made out the gratifying flavor on my lips: it was olive oil! Suddenly the timber submerged; and out of the water, confusion and darkness the figure of Merefredo emerged beside me. With a vigorous straight-arm I sent him tumbling back into the sea, yelling at him: "This isn't a lifeboat, it's only a plank! Just hold on, don't ride it!" He whimpered: *"Dove e'?"*

"Dove'e che? Where is what?" I asked; and he replied: *"Mia santa barca,* my blessed ship."

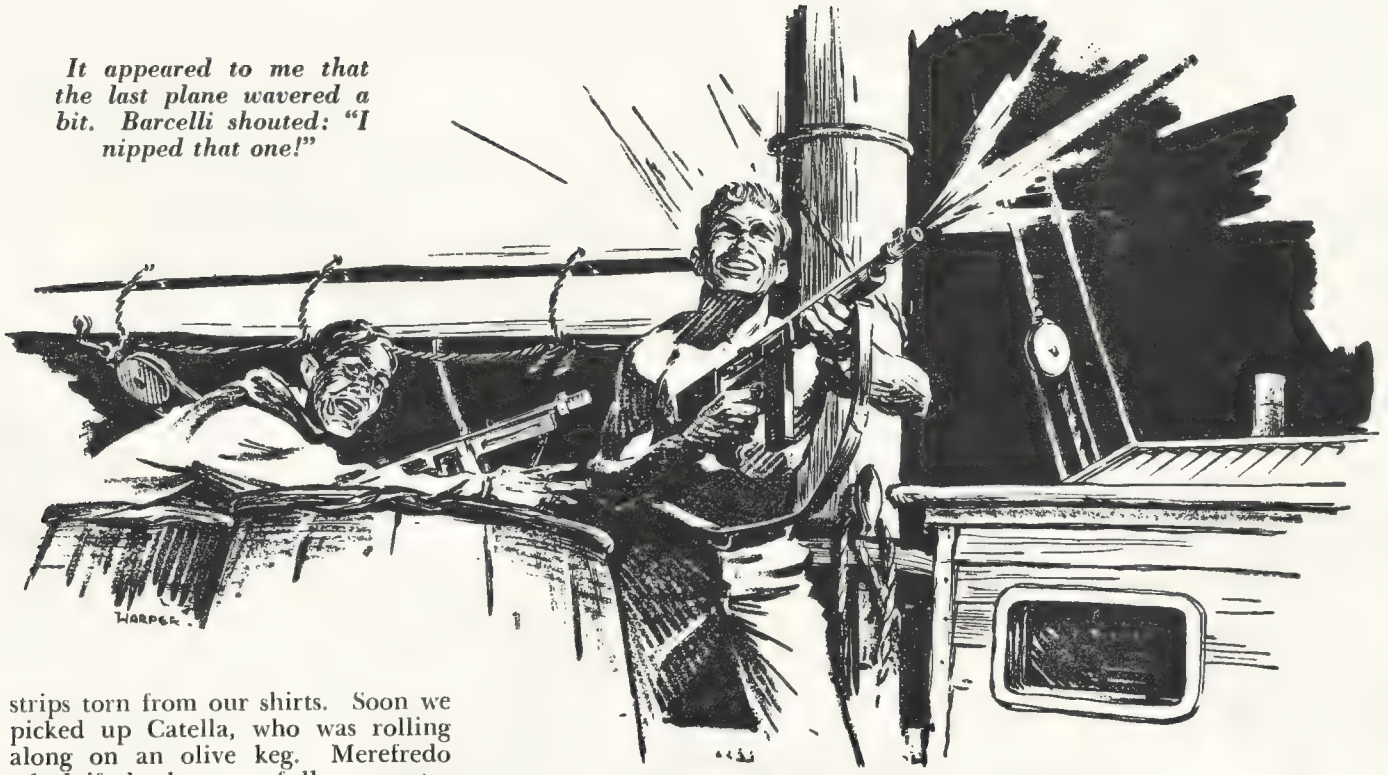
"Shut up about your boat. We've still got to save our lives. Your boat's gone." He complained further. I made no answer, but continued in my worried search for Fabiano, who had been wounded. I discovered him hanging to a bobbing cask, Barcelli rendering him assistance. We maneuvered the timber to the cask, recovered another cask, and with the three objects improvised a raft which held us rather well. Catella was still missing.

We now solved the mystery as to just what had happened. As the bomber was diving toward its mark, a ship exploded; and a flying chunk of metal, traveling with the velocity of a cannon-fired projectile, arrived in time to save us and visit woe upon Merefredo by reducing his ship to flotsam and jetsam. Or perhaps our precarious rescue was due to an underwater explosion.

With sticks and cupped hands we started to paddle toward the shore, a mile away. The raid was definitely over, but Porto Nuovo, with its ships' masts all ablaze, looked like a vast forest fire. Now came an eye-popping blast which must have shaken the very axis of the earth. An ammunition ship exploded. Clouds of smoke with red, yellow and green linings shot five thousand feet into the air. Meteoric sheets of metal rocketed in all directions carrying incendiary torches to other ships, setting off a series of explosions which could be likened to Chinese firecrackers, each firecracker a ship of from seven to ten thousand tons. In between the ship fulminations, every one of which had its own powder magazine, the piers leaped with detonations of artillery shells and sacks of gunpower piled on the docks.

OCCASIONALLY small black objects were seen in the upward rush of flame and smoke; then I would avert my eyes. I could not allow my mind to dwell on the piteous fate of those sailors and dock workers. Hypnotized in horror, we forgot to paddle, and floated about on the waters like condemned penitents viewing the liquid caves of a hell that not even a Dante could conjure up from the most lurid imagination. The "Cease Alarm," had sounded, but it seemed a mockery, with the waves of fire sweeping in from the sea and licking at the shores in an attempt to devour the land itself.

Over the purple and red-tinted waters presently came the shriek of the siren announcing another alarm. Six spine-chilling blasts of five seconds each prepared the frozen blood for another attack. Our frightened glance upward revealed no airplanes, so we turned again to the important business of getting ashore. Seizing some odd pieces of wood floating by, we fashioned them into fairly good oars, and vigorously splashed our way forward. Fabiano's wound was not serious—the bullet had cut cleanly through the flesh, and he had lost scarcely any blood. We bandaged the injury with



It appeared to me that the last plane wavered a bit. Barcelli shouted: "I nipped that one!"

strips torn from our shirts. Soon we picked up Catella, who was rolling along on an olive keg. Merefredo asked if the keg was full or empty; and when Catella replied that it was utterly void, Merefredo gasped a lament and inquired if he had seen the *Inaffondabile.* He could not pronounce *Monitor and Merrimac.* We jeered when he said *Inaffondabile,* recalling to him that his unsinkable schooner had already twice belied its name, once in the port of Castellammare and now again; finally, here.

We had now entered into an area of water black with darkness. The oar slipped from my grasp, and I groped about in the liquid shadows for it. Suddenly the missing paddle was before my eyes as clear as a pike-staff, and I could see every wrinkle of worry in the face of Merefredo. The whole ocean abruptly lighted up with all the brilliance of a railroad station waiting-room. We listened for the roar of the planes, certain now that flares had been dropped by a new squadron of invaders. But we heard no sound of propellers, and we saw no evidence of aircraft. I turned my eyes on Porto Nuovo, and my flesh crept away from my bones. The sea had opened up like a drawbridge; then came the earth-devastating crash and smash of an eruption too fierce to be assimilated; the world rose beneath us, and our raft bounced and bounded like a hard-hit tennis ball. An oil tanker had exploded. Since light travels infinitely faster than sound, we had naturally seen the illumination before the report of the discharge reached us. The variety of colors in the seething ferment one thousand meters high created a sheer fantasy in chromatics. Racks of crimson, pink, carbuncle and rose billowed and blended with sheets of orange, green, sepia and yellow, producing the effect of a colossal paint factory ablaze.

And then, against the smoke-smudged horizon we thrilled to the sight of a ship under power moving out to sea. Its masts were cylinders of fire; its sails were flames. An Italian ship, operated by its own crew, was moving out to the open sea so that it might not be the instrument of destruction to sister vessels.

SEVENTEEN ships were now at the bottom or on their way there. One thousand casualties had taken place in the port. The submarine steel nets were torn as if they had been made of thread. Had enemy undersea craft coördinated with the planes, they probably could have entered the port without molestation and leisurely torpedoed the few ships still afloat.

Increasing the tempo of our paddling, we now quickly reached a point where we could wade ashore. We landed at Marcello Vecchio at a point just beyond the end of the sidewalk of Lungomare, which that day had reminded me somewhat of Atlantic City. A British sentinel confronted us with fixed bayonet, but the corporal of the guard whom he hastily summoned conducted us in a motor vehicle to tents where we had an opportunity to dry our clothes before a large pot-bellied stove. A Lieutenant Ashton offered me a uniform until mine should be fit to wear again. I accepted it, and went into the city.

Bari looked like a medieval city attending upon a mass midnight burial. Roman torches flared in the December night; wailing rose and fell in the tenebrous air; chanting could be heard in the distance. The whole electric power system had been crippled. Improvised hand-made torches lighted up the work of digging victims from the wrecked buildings. The streets were a bog of broken glass. Every window in the city was in fragments; doors and iron shutters were torn apart.

Firemen, carabinieri, home guards and Allied soldiers worked furiously all that night and the next two days digging out survivors and the dead from the wreckage. When, with my companions, I left on a truck for Naples, the most startling impression I carried with me was not my adventure in the water, but the experience of those buried in that cemetery of living rock. No one can appraise the terror and agony of those who suddenly found themselves with tons of smashing weight on their limbs and bodies while their brains told them they were in a vise from which there was no escape. In utter darkness, without strength to call out for help, or if able to call, they could hear only the torturing rebound of their voices in the ever-narrowing cavern which was quickly becoming their coffin. Women and children, feeling the blood of injury in their faces, in their mouths, in their eyes, crying for husbands and fathers who perhaps were lying in similar dungeons of pain not far away, and they in turn calling out for beloved ones—and in most instances all in vain.

The public reports of an air raid merely indicates that there were casualties. Months later a total figure is published of losses over a given period of time, or perhaps of a certain raid.

The statistics are tongue-tied and tell nothing of the real tragedy. As an example, the law in Italy provides that passengers of all types must dismount from their vehicles at the time of an airplane attack and enter air raid shelters. On Via Crisanzio thirty-five passengers fled from a hastily stopped autobus to a *ricovero* on the corner. A few minutes later the shelter suffered a direct hit and all within perished. The autobus was untouched.

Water from a broken pipe poured into the *ricovero* on Via Piccini after it had been hit. As the level of the black water rose, the prisoners within called out to each other in mutual comfort and to determine if they were still alive. A woman with her babe struggled to the stairs which led to the exit. The rescuers, separated from the victims by impenetrable wreckage, continued to shout encouragement as the responding voices within became weaker and fainter. The woman could be heard saying: *"Non voglio morire*—I don't want to die!" She had almost reached the top of the stairs when vertigo, weakness and confusion overcame her resistance, and those outside heard the splash of her body with that of her baby. Then all was silent. Seventeen perished here.

IN a house on Via Abate Gimma, sliced open by a bomb, a woman's dress of many bright colors fluttered gayly from a gaping bedroom on the second floor. For two days this merry garment waved a salute, so out of harmony with the grimness underneath—rescuers were digging for fifteen bodies buried in the rubble. On the third day passers-by were startled to see a black robe in place of the cheerful one. Of course what had happened was that the outer garment had slipped off its hook, and the sober one underneath came into evidence; but this did not modify the spine-chilling sensation which hit the onlookers as they gazed upon the sepulchral cloth proclaiming a building's death.

Looking at the fatality lists, one occasionally comes to a name repeated seven, eight or nine times, and then one is struck with the heart-sinking realization that here a whole family—from the parents down to the one-year-old baby—has been completely wiped out. No one is left even to mourn at the mass funeral.

A few months later I was assigned to duty at Bari, and one evening as, with my friend Rodolf Barrone, I walked down Corso Vittorio Emanuele, a young girl with a strikingly beautiful figure and a healthy, graceful stride passed us. She wore a heavy veil. Replying to my unspoken query, Barrone said: "That girl was one of the most extraordinarily beautiful young women of Bari. She was in a ***ricovero*** that night of December 2nd, and it collapsed. I cannot tell you the extent of her disfigurement. She is a very reflective individual, and has asked her parents for permission to take her life; she has calmly even discussed the matter with her pastor. They have all naturally vehemently argued against her intention, and have urged her to remove the veil; but she has said that if anyone sees her face as it is, she will without further discussion hurl herself from a high window, walk into the sea, turn on the gas—there are many ways of doing what an air raid sometimes does not do but the victim wishes it had done."

During the period of duty in Bari I had to pass several times a day, on the way to my lodging, a house in which lived a man who had his face blown off in the raid of December 2nd. Plastic surgery had been attempted, and the result was a piteous one. And each time as I approached the house I hoped I might not have to confront the ghastly sight, and each time I was doomed not only to see it, but to look directly at the frightful apparition, and smile a pleasant greeting. It is probable that when people smile and cheerily speak to him, this poor devil thinks his countenance is not as repulsive and forbidding as some children make out; perhaps he believes this until he looks into a mirror; and then he knows the meaning of war. He is one who knows that battles and air raids are not dash and romance as they appear in the movies, where the most painful experience carries a sheen of glory which anesthetizes, beautifies.

And when in the years to come I think of Bari, the first picture which will come to mind will not be that of a city which has known glory and greatness; I will not reflect on her illustrious history through the ages; nor will I recall her as the Queen of the Adriatic. Instead, I will have before me the image of the *Monitor and Merrimac* in a thousand bits at the bottom of the sea, and I will think of the lives which have been shattered into as many piteous fragments, seeking through the ocean of a misfortune they did not court, to sail into a harbor which may some day know a little of happiness and much of love.

"Shut up about your boat. We've still got to save our lives."

Loud Beats

MAN'S GREATEST VICTORY is courage, whether it be displayed in conquest or defeat. For this reason, the Battle of Chapultepec is chiefly to be remembered for the splendid courage displayed on both sides. As we go to press, a newspaper reports:

"A delegation of West Point cadets today presented an American flag to the Mexican Military Academy in part of the observance of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Chapultepec between Mexican and United States forces.

"Cadet groups from twelve American countries honored the memory of the 'boy heroes,' the six cadets who hurled themselves over the parapet of Chapultepec Castle rather than surrender to United States troops."

Captain Simmons' story, of course, is fiction; and so far as we know, the take-off command for the final assault was not given because of a drummer boy's error. We think it is a good story, however; and it is interesting as a reminder that a Marine battalion took part in this action —and hence the opening phrase of their famous song, "From the Halls of Montezuma—" (According to tradition, the palace of the Aztec ruler Montezuma originally occupied the height upon which the Castle of Chapultepec was built.)

ADAM PLUNKETT, drummer of Company C, thought it right foolish to stand there knee-deep in mud getting shot at. But there in the ditch the company stood with the ground rising sharp to the rocky heights where the Mexican cannon were.

Chapultepec was the Mexican name of the place. Adam hated this bright yellow land where the names either clicked on your tongue or rolled off like water: Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Puebla, El Molino del Rey, Tacubaya. . . .

The sweating Marines of Company C, cursing the Mexicans and the heat, pressed against the forward side of the ditch for the cover it offered, bit off the ends of their paper cartridges, and fired their rifled muskets at the smoke-hazed *castillo* above. They had begun the morning with forty cartridges to a man. Now most of the ammunition had been fired away and the Captain looked stern-faced and concerned.

Sweat trickled down Adam's armpits and soaked through the back of his tight woolen jacket. The sun was rising, and the morning was getting hotter. Hadn't Captain Terrett said they would take the Castle by eight? It was much later than that, Adam was sure. He looked back at the long blue line. A hundred yards to the rear of Company C were the other three companies of the Marine Battalion, organized into storming parties with scaling ladders and such. To the left of them were the Army regiments of General Quitman's division. No one seemed to be moving. A fine way to press an attack, thought Adam.

The sound of the Mexican cannon boomed loud, and the American line, stricken with a strange paralysis, was riddled again and again with a scathing mixture of shell, canister, grape and solid shot. Adam wished he was almost anywhere except right where he was. . . .

War wasn't anything like he had

the Drum

by CAPTAIN EDWIN SIMMONS, USMC

been promised. This was September 13, 1847. It had been May—four months before—when he had stopped to listen to that recruiting sergeant. He had rowed over from Brooklyn that morning with a crate of eggs and some garden truck to sell. His father had given him a Spanish two-bit piece to spend as ever he wished, and he had been walking along the Bowery wondering what to buy. The sergeant in a hat like a polished stovepipe was haranguing a cluster of tough young bucks.

A regiment of Marines was recruiting, he was saying, and they were going to march straight to the Halls of Monty-zooma. You never saw such a land as that Mexico, he said. Gold so common they use it to cook in. And girls, lads, you've never seen the like. Golden beauties, every one. The regiment was forming at Fort Hamilton, and there was a bonus for every lad that signed.

Young Adam—how he regretted the day!—had shouldered through and asked to be signed.

"You're too much of a lad," the sergeant had laughed.

"I'm sixteen—almost seventeen," Adam had defended.

THE sergeant rubbed a blue-bristled chin. Regulations said five feet six, which the boy was not by a good four inches; but there was room in the regiment for another field musician.

"How would you like to be a drummer, lad?"

Adam allowed that he would like it fine. . . .

Fort Hamilton was a place of tents and parade-ground, drill and practice. He was issued a varnished drum with a white sheepskin head and a pair of sticks. The smallest uniform in the commissary was cut down to a tolerable fit by the camp tailor, and the shoulder-caps of a field musician were added. Then Adam met the Principal Musician. This red-faced, rum-scented individual was in charge of the military and musical training of the regiment's fifers and drummers—so he informed them in heavy tones. And that was the beginning of Adam's grief.

It soon developed that young Adam Plunkett had a gift: he could beat the loudest, longest roll in the regiment. He quickly learned the double and single drag, with variations. When he imitated musketry, the crackling from his drumhead sounded like a volley from the whole regiment. But the Principal Musician was far from satisfied.

"There is more than noise to come out of the drum," he said in accents sarcastic. "Remember you are the voice of the commander. You must know the rhythm of all the calls."

But there were so many. Adam's head had ached from trying to remember them. There must have been more than a hundred, and they all seemed alike:

Reveille, First Call, Colors, Officers' Call, Assembly, Line of Fours, Line of Squads, Line of Platoons, Call to Quarters, Recall, Dismiss, Tattoo, Taps.

The time allowed for training at Fort Hamilton was brief; the regiment was soon packed aboard a transport headed south. Then came a seasick week on the Atlantic, followed by a seasick week on the Gulf. Each day, while the horizons heaved and tossed, the Principal Musician would muster his reluctant musicians in the waist of the ship for practice. You must know the calls, he said. . . .

They landed at Vera Cruz on the first of July, the regiment marching through the city with Company C straggling along to the beat of Adam Plunkett's drum. They made camp on the beach north of the city, and there they stayed for two mosquito-bitten weeks.

Then as part of Pierce's brigade they set out to join General Scott's army, which was moving on the Mexican capital. It was a long, wearing march, plagued by strange fevers, tropical rains, and the shadowy figures of a guerrilla enemy. The varnish of the drum lost its sheen, and the drumhead grew gray and stained. Of golden cooking-pans or liquid-eyed beauties languishing for a Yanqui's love Adam saw none. He began to doubt if the Americans had any real business being in this foreign land.

Finally on August 6, with Adam beating a brave if erratic quickstep, they marched into Puebla, and found old Fuss-and-Feathers Scott planning the final assault on Mexico City. The Marines, too few in number to be a proper regiment, had been reorganized as a battalion. Reshuffled, they were brigaded with the Second Pennsylvania Volunteers and attached to General Quitman's Fourth Division. Formal war, for Adam, was about to begin.

Mexico City got its water, Captain Terrett had explained to a company that didn't particularly care, by way of two aqueducts that moved down the center of causeways that also served as roads. These causeways pierced the city's walls at two points—the San Cosme and Belen *garitas* or gates. Adam thought that it would have been much simpler if everyone had had a well, the way they had at home.

Whoever held the Castle of Chapultepec, said the Captain, controlled these approaches to the city. The *castillo* had once been a summer palace of the Spanish governors; now it served as the Military Academy of the Republic. Its stone walls were thick, and a day's pounding by Scott's artillery had apparently bothered its defenders not at all. They said the corps of cadets was still up there—whoever it was, the defense was stubborn.

Old Fuss-and-Feathers had directed an assault on three sides. The Marine Battalion was given the post of honor in Quitman's division—the right flank. But somehow the attack had bogged down, and here they stood in Pulque ditch, sparsely screened by maguey bushes, while the Mexican guns cut them down. Lieutenant-Colonel Watson, the battalion commander, was off somewhere. Major Levi Twiggs had been killed. The Army regiments to the left and rear weren't moving. There were no orders from division headquarters. No one seemed to know what to do. And the sun was getting hotter all the time.

NOW a runner, breathing hard, dropped into the ditch and slid over to the company commander.

"The Colonel's compliments, sir," he panted. "And will the Captain rejoin the main body at once."

Captain Terrett looked back across the hundred yards of fire-swept slope. Then he looked at his thinning line of Marines hovering close to the forward bank of the ditch. It had taken lives to get to the ditch, but orders were orders. . . .

"Mr. Sims," he said resignedly to his first lieutenant. "Prepare the company to withdraw." He looked around again.

"Music!" he called, and Adam hunched down the ditch to his commander.

"Sound the retreat."

"The retreat, sir?" The words were dry and cottony in Adam's mouth.

"The retreat," repeated the Captain.

Adam steadied his sticks in his sweaty, trembling hands. He tapped the drumhead tentatively, and then his hands blurred in a loud, ripping roll.

The blue line stiffened and looked up, surprised. They stood poised and ready, but their bayonets pointed up the hill, not to the rear.

"Damn it, boy," the Captain yelled above the din of the drum. "That's the wrong call! You're sounding the charge. But"—and a devilish grin came over his face—"if that's the direction the lads want to go—"

The Captain's saber pointed at the fort above, and he gave a high, piercing yell that the gray would make famous on greater battlefields a few years later.

Company C boiled out of the ditch and on up the slope, bayonets glinting in the morning sun. The other three Marine companies, thinking that or-

ABOUT "SPY WORK AHEAD"

A Reader's Comment, by WALTER W. TAYLOR, JR.

MY attention has recently been called to the article entitled "SPY WORK AHEAD" in your August issue. Since it directly refers to me and my final gesture in the late war, I was gratified to find it so accurate both in fact and in feeling.

However, one of the inaccuracies which I did notice did an injustice to a brave man, and therefore I feel that, if only for the record, I must make a correction. I refer to the statement that "The excited agent leaped from the car and started to run back" (p. 91, August).

When the French agent, Lolo (I never knew his real name, of course), was brought to us by the Maquis chief, neither Captain Greene nor myself wanted to use him—he was the most tired man I have ever seen awake and on his feet! For the six days since the invasion he had been fighting and in the field against the Germans constantly, day and night without rest or sleep to speak of. He would be talking to us and the next instant be fast asleep either standing or sitting. But the Maquis chief said that, groggy or not, he would produce better and more reliable information than any other man, so we reluctantly took him.

When Lolo and I rounded that last corner and came face to face with the road-block, both of us felt that it was a Maquis obstacle, even though we could see no one. When I saw the bushes move at the side of the road, I told Lolo to call out and tell them that we were Allies and looking for lost parachutists (my cover story). The next thing I knew he had grabbed my carbine which was lying between us on the car seat, jumped out onto the road, and was stalking up the pavement with the weapon at a high port! He lasted just five feet beyond the car—and never knew what hit him.

The point that I wish to make is that Lolo was going *toward* the enemy and not *back*. What he was thinking about and what he thought he would accomplish by exposing himself, whether the road-block had been French or German, I never knew. Perhaps in his dog-tired state, he was not thinking at all, but the fact is that instinctively or consciously he was a brave man and died going forward.

ders to attack had been received, leaped up to follow, and farther left, the Army regiments gave yells of their own, and with guidons fluttering, joined the charge. Adam, trotting along on stubby legs, drumsticks whirring in an uninterrupted roll, thought he never saw anything so fine as that long blue line sweeping up that slope toward the gray-green *castillo*.

Company C, with Captain Terrett at the head, and Musician Plunkett close behind, scaled the wall and went through an embrasure into a three-gun battery position. Bayonets found the gunners' throats. Adam looked at the Mexican dead; some of them were just boys like himself. Cadets, he guessed. Then they were through a castle gate onto the causeway.

Ahead of them lay the highway to Mexico City, traced by the arches of the aqueduct. The Captain glanced around him.

"Beat the assembly," he ordered.

The drumsticks banged against the drumhead, and the men gathered round; less than a sergeant's section were left.

"Double quickstep," ordered the Captain. The drum banged again, and the men moved at a trot along the causeway. The Mexicans were withdrawing, but not in too much of a hurry. The Marines came under fire, and the advance became a business of running from archway to archway of the aqueduct with pauses to reload and fire.

They fought their way to where the causeway to San Cosme intersected the road to Belen Gate. A blast of canister warned them not to try to cross. What was left of Company C deployed along the edge of the causeway.

"They've got a hidden gun that's enfilading the road," Mr. Sims told the Captain quite unnecessarily.

"We'll give the men a minute to catch their breath, and then we'll see what can be done about it," replied the Captain, counting the remaining members of his company.

BY luck a mixed unit of the 4th Infantry and South Carolina Volunteers—a platoon in strength—pelted down the stone-paved highway and dropped into position alongside the Marines. A stocky young second lieutenant with a square-cut, unperturbed face seemed to be in charge. He wanted to know what the trouble was.

"The Mex have a gun enfilading the road," the Captain answered.

"What's the Captain's plan?"

"Even a well-served gun can fire just so fast. We'll cross the road by bounds, reorganize under cover of the bank, and take the gun on the flank."

Adam admired the way they spoke; as correctly as though this were a parade-ground drill.

The Lieutenant flashed his sword, drawing their fire.

"Excellent," said the Lieutenant. "I have twenty or so men—regulars and *palmettos*—to help. Now if the Captain's men are ready, I'll see if I can draw the Mex's fire."

The young Army Lieutenant leaped to the crest of the road and flashed his sword in the morning sunlight. A finely split second after he had dropped flat on the paving-stones, the Mexican gun boomed.

"Forward," yelled the Captain, sword pointing the way. His drum banging against his side, Adam scampered across the road at his Captain's heels, a splattering of rifle-balls pursuing him.

A pause on the other side of the road; a hurried reorganization into column; a quick movement in the shadow of the causeway; and then they burst into the gun position. The young Lieutenant was out in front; hatless and his long ginger-colored hair flying. The gun's crew was finished with bayonet and ball, and only a short stretch of causeway separated the mixed command from the Gate of San Cosme.

The gun was turned to bear on the gates. There was no lack of cannoneers: the Army lieutenant showed a knowledge of ordnance, and some of the Marines had served as gunners at sea. A few rounds of solid shot at point-blank range breached the wooden gates.

"We can take it in one more rush," estimated the Captain. "And I have the drummer to beat the charge."

Once again the drumsticks whirred their challenge. Adam felt the magic surge from his drum; and the command—Marines, soldiers, and volunteers—charged down the paved road. The few defending Mexican riflemen let loose a raking volley of rifle-balls at these wild blue-clad *Americanos,* before they turned to run.

Something banged against Adam's drum; something burned against his side. The Captain caught him before he could fall.

"Steady, lad, you're only creased. Lean on me, and you'll make it. Just a few more yards."

THE gate was gained and forced; the Americans passed over the threshold of the Mexican capital. The Captain and the Army Lieutenant quickly posted their meager force to defend the hard-won salient. When there was time for breath and pleasantries, the Captain turned to the Army Lieutenant:

"Well fought, sir! I am Captain George H. Terrett of the Marine Battalion."

The sun-browned hands of the two gripped firmly.

"My compliments, sir. And I am Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant, quartermaster 4th Infantry, at your service."

Then Captain Terrett turned his attention to his wounded drummer.

Young Adam Plunkett was resting with his back against the wall and his shattered drum by his side.

"How are you, lad?" the Captain asked.

"My drum is ruint," said Adam.

"I'll get you another," promised the Captain. "And we'll have Chapultepec lettered in gold on its side."

"That was an awful mistake I made, sir," said Adam. "Beating the wrong call, I mean. There are so many, I never could get the hang of them all."

The Captain hid a grin behind a straightened face.

"Lad, I think you know all the calls you need to know. And you can tell the Principal Musician that for me."

And that is the way Chapultepec was taken. Of course, history books tell it somewhat differently; but then history is a solemn, serious thing, and could hardly admit that a battle was won because of a drummer-boy's mistake.

Illustrated by John Costigan, N. A.

On this Florida stock-farm he was to sire a splendid new palomino strain—and fought a base-born intruder to the death.

by DON CAMPBELL

THE golden mare screamed, rose on her hindlegs and pawed the air above the cowering ranch hand. Rod Connors shouted above the animal's ringing challenge, bringing her to a semblance of attention.

"Lady, you devil, you get a kick out of scaring Slim, don't you? Here!"

Buccaneer's Lady, by a son of Pirate Pickles out of a Roan Allen mare, calmly paced to her master's side, waiting for the scolding she deserved, ears twitching, eyes dancing.

"I'm sorry, Slim, you let her take advantage of you. It doesn't— Hey, Slim, where—" The half-breed Seminole was gone. Connors frowned, absently stroking the horse's muzzle. A nice homicidal sort of urge seemed to come over the Lady when the 'breed came near her, and something disturbingly similar seemed to glint in Slim's close-set eyes.

Rod looked over the strongly made mare for marks which might show what had aroused her fury this time. There were none. Lady was small but not delicate. Her quarter-horse strain from Don McCue gave her haunches strength to stop, hover and turn on the proverbial dime; the Allen line gave her cleanness of limb and her dream-smooth gaits; Pirate Pickles gave her skin its jet hue, her coat the sheen of a newly minted bar of gold, and her mane and tail the contrasting silver which, together, made her eligible for the coveted registration with the palomino breeders' organizations in America.

Rod turned to the paddock fence as his father approached

Reflectively the older man said: "That's one of the finest mares in the Florida palomino country, Rod. Time to find a likely sire for her first colt."

"Yes, Dad," the boy answered. "Have you any of the neighbors' stallions in mind?"

"Nope, can't say there's a one nearby who's good enough for the youngster I want."

"Do you think her prepotency is strong enough to breed back to a palomino?"

Mr. Connors' brow was furrowed. "That's hard to say. Palominos are not a breed—not yet! Some of the best breeders in the country are working, giving their hearts to the task of making them one. Some of the New England lines have been known to breed palomino from black mares; but in interbreeding, you chance getting an albino. A more pitiful, useless failure doesn't exist in the breeding world."

The boy's eyes were alive with interest. "Where did these horses *first* come from, Dad?"

"A century ago, Rod, men found along the Mexican border a golden horse whose kin traced back to the mount the Crusaders saw when they met the Saracen in the Holy Land. He was never very plentiful, since these regal animals were only owned by kings and emperors.

"The Spanish settlers in America had bred their horses to the gold color, but not to a great extent. Within the past twenty-five years the palomino organizations have increased their ac-

Golden Spur

tivity. The first registered PHBA stallion, El Rey de los Reyes, King of the Kings, still lives in Santa Barbara, California. A perfect palomino, he is the symbol of what we want to make of the gold horse in the future. He was born of palomino sire and dam, his grandsire a registered thoroughbred.

"I want the Lady here to be a step forward in palomino breeding. It would be a credit to her lines if she threw a gold colt by a palomino sire. She might never bear another, but yet—"

The rancher's face grew dreamy, and Rod grinned, recognizing his father's "big plans" expression. Whistling, he strolled away to his work, leaving the elderly man to watch the imagined friskings of a golden-coated, silver-maned colt with long slim legs, at the side of the Lady, his pride.

SLIM scuffed sand as he trudged through his ranch duties. Now and then he threw the grazing mare a malevolent look. His early life at the Brighton Corners crafts school had only enhanced the complex which haunted him into hating white man and Indian alike. The other Seminoles accepted him reluctantly; the tourists regarded him warily; and the teachers were nonplused. They had not known quite what to do with Slim. Finally the boy had solved their problem by wandering away into the cattle ranges near Ocala, Arcadia, Kissimmee, covering ground between short-termed jobs.

Three months before, he had arrived, footsore and broke, to ask Fred Connors for work. He did not last long at grooming the horses, since his own nervousness made them restive. He finally settled on general handy work and fence-fixing.

The enmity between the 'breed and the Lady had begun strictly as a joke on her part. As he bent one day, intent on a broken fence rail, she had crept up behind him and stolen a rag from his back pocket. Raging and shouting, Slim had pursued her, throwing every object he could lay hands on. A few direct hits, and the joke was all over for the Lady. She turned on him in earnest, teeth bared for business.

Slim had fled with a scream of mortal terror, the deadly silent mare close behind him. He had reached the fence in time, and trembling with fear and fury, turned and slashed her with a pocket-knife. Her nostril dripping scarlet, the Lady had risen to crush her enemy with flailing forefeet, but eel-like, he wriggled out of reach, leaving her never to forgive—nor forget.

ROD CONNORS and his father, with Eric, the hired hand, washed for dinner at the capacious kitchen sink. Mrs. Knudsen, cook-in-chief, surveyed them critically as they passed into the dining-room. She tried to mother them all in the place of Alice Connors, who had not weathered her first attack of malaria. Meekly the men and boy held out gnarled paws for her inspection. She tossed her graying head, and with a glint in her eyes, said: "Never mind, I'm just thankful I don't see how you eat on the range!"

Still chuckling, Fred Connors seated himself at the head of the gingham-clothed table, and looked about the room.

"Where is that scamp sister of yours, Rod?"

"You mean that rascally daughter of yours, Father?" Rod grinned. "I think I hear her coming now."

A clatter of riding-boots, scrape of her chair, and *plop* of wiry weight into its cane bottom, and Sherry had arrived. She had the look of a cat with canary all ready for swallowing, or news too great to hold, but nevertheless bowed her head and waited.

The meal had well begun before Sherry's darting gray eyes and reddening face made the rest of the gathering realize that she could hold out no longer.

"Well?" Her father quizzed, with a half-smile.

"There's a new stallion coming! Mr. Sims had him sent from one of the big Texas ranches. He's going to stand at one of Sims' ranches."

"When will he be here, Sherry?" Rod asked.

"They're taking him to Ocala to the barns. Probably next week. Do you think?"

"What's his breeding?" Fred Connors snapped.

"He's by Haroun out of Medina, by Don Luna. He's never been bred to a gold mare—" Sherry's sentence drifted into silence, and the four thrilled to names famous in palomino stock, and wondered. . . .

From the surrounding counties the ranchers had gathered at the stud barns to look over the newcomer. Joel Sims, proud owner of the stud, talked seriously to Fred Connors, apart from the rest of the admiring crowd.

"Fred, if you're willing to risk the cost, we'll breed your Lady. When can you bring her?"

"Can't say right offhand, but I'll let you know in plenty of time. Just don't let those books get too crowded."

Connors joined his family and Eric at the fence where they stood gazing in awe at the animal in the paddock. Soldado de Oro, Golden Soldier, stood quietly as far from the crowds as he could. Directly in the center of the enclosure, he was poised, keeping an eye on all around him, letting no movement escape his attention. Not for him the prancing and posturing evinced by the young stallion in the next paddock. Soldado stood fifteen and one-half hands at the withers; his face showed the centuries of Arab and Barb breeding in his faultless make-up. Eyes wide and dark, with immeasurable wisdom; nostrils flared red and quivering in the heavy warm air. Small, exquisitely pointing ears moved to catch the slightest sound. A silver foretop blew about them, and ran into a thick, harshly waving mane adorning a splendidly arched crest and neck which curved delicately into a wide deep chest, strong sloping shoulders. Well-boned forelegs culminated in small, flinty hoofs. The stallion's hindquarters, muscled like satin-sheathed steel, were partially hidden by a thick silver tail.

Without a word the Connors turned and walked away, hope flickering bright among them. . . .

A HORSE'S scream of agony and terror shattered sleep and literally lifted Rod from his bed. Running, he hit the pine floor, met his father in the narrow hallway, and together they raced through the wide fields to the paddock where, from the depths of dread, they knew the terrible screams were coming.

Father and son, speeding through a lower pasture, could see the struggle. A man clung to the mare's thrashing crest like a killer lion, dealing blow after blow, until the boy and man saw with despair that the animal sagged, fell to her knees. Then the figure

broke away; and with a shout of anger, fled over the paddock fence, mounted a ground-tethered pony and rode away into the mist.

Side by side the pair vaulted the fence, stooped at the side of the dead mare, cursing quietly, with venom. One by one the rest of the household arrived, panting. Sherry, her face streaked with hysterical tears, broke from Eric's restraining hands, and clung to her kneeling father's shoulder.

"Her throat!" she gasped.

The mare's throat was torn by dozens of savage knife-cuts. The killer had clung to the animal with fanatical determination until the chance came to deliver the final blow. Handfuls of mane were torn out, and lay on the ground, pitiful wisps of silver, blowing about in the light breeze.

Eric stood grim and silent behind his boss. He noted that eighteen-year-old Rod's eyes were brimming.

"Whoever it was found out too late that he murdered the wrong mare."

"He meant to get her, all right," Rod said softly. "You're sure she's safe in her box, Eric?"

"Yes. Poor Plata, unlucky change for her! She'll get her grass in the Trapalanda."

Rod looked at the face he had often stroked. Sweet Plata, even-tempered, eager on the trail or field! Perhaps she did gallop free on the plains of the heaven for horses.

Fred Connors was scanning the ground around them, giving orders as he did so.

"Rod, Eric, we're tracking Plata's killer. Get Devil and Vixen and some horses. Sherry, stay with the Lady every minute. Feed and groom her. We want to get to Sims' this evening, travel in the cool of the day. I'm glad he took the stud to one of the outlying ranches. Mrs. Knudsen, be ready to feed us good when we get back!"

Devil and Vixen, a mixture of shepherd and deerhound, bred by Fred Connors since he had come to the Florida peninsula, coursed the ground efficiently, and struck out effortlessly across the grassland. Rod, his father and Eric followed, their mounts cantering easily. Gradually the dogs quickened to a run, and their full deep voices swelled in the dawn.

THE horses were foam-flecked, the dogs panting when they pulled up beside a railroad track. One of the ranch's ponies trotted out of the brush, whickering to the others. The hounds turned to their master for instructions. Fred Connors saw the story in the dripping spout of the water-tank and the plume of smoke in the distance, and slowly turned his horse about.

"Leave it, Devil, Vixen. We're going home." Then to his son: "That train is headed for Ocala. I think we'll take the long way to Sims' ranch today. When the Lady's safe, phone an alarm for that 'breed!" . . .

The usual crowds were gathered at the stock barns to watch the trading. No one, however, noted a dealer, disreputable-looking as his collection of animals, who bickered smoothly with the shuffling half-breed.

The beast over which they wrangled was an albino stallion, head hung in pitiable effort to avoid the blazing sun, against which his eyes were squinted shut. His conformation was sketchy but robust, coat patched with yellowish white hair and scraggly of mane and tail. He was large, over sixteen hands, and heavily boned.

"Fifty bucks. He'll breed you some fine plow-horses, and no trouble to keep. He don't take so well to a saddle. Mostly a harness horse. Uh—touchy, you know."

Slim saw the vicious gleam whenever the animal looked about him, and was well pleased. With much hesitation and haggling, he paid thirty-five dollars for the beast and led him away through the crowds. His aspect was one of grim determination as he invisioned the quiet field where the Lady would be placed to await the morning. He gave the white beast an unexpected pat as he grinned, thinking of the consternation of the breeders, and months later, the weak misshapen freak which would be born to the Lady, proud Buccaneer's Lady, his foe.

IT was late when the Connors' truck drew near Sims' gate. Fred hallooed, but received no answer.

"I'm going to walk to the stable. Get the Lady out, Sherry; Joel will have a box or paddock for her. She might as well stretch her legs until I find out for sure if he wants her here or at the Oaks, down the line. Be back in a few minutes." And he strode up the drive.

Darkness was closing around the group as Sherry led the Lady about the truck. Rod napped in the truck cab, and Eric fussed in the stall compartment. The silence was restful, and Sherry let the Lady graze and snuff where she would. A scraggly bay tree hid the parked trailer as Sherry heard the sound of a horse approaching slowly. Sherry noted that they were passing near the pasture fence; inside this was the horse they heard advancing.

Intently, Sherry waited. The mare lifted her head and nickered. An answer came quickly, and a commanding shape loomed before them. It was the royal stud. His neck arched, his ears pricked with interest, and his nostrils flared wide. Scarcely had the two horses touched noses, when a veritable thunder of hoofs announced a new arrival. Snorting, the ugly albino stallion pawed and tossed his bulky head. Seeming to sense the confinement of the golden stud, the grayish misfit, self-confident in the gathering dark, where his eyes were not tortured by sunlight, pranced aggressively up to the Lady.

He received twin piston blows in the chest for his efforts. Infuriated, he reared with a squeal and brought his hoofs across the Lady's shoulders in a ripping blow. She neighed in fury and attacked, but the albino was too heavy for her. He drove her back until she lashed at him with her back against the fence.

SHERRY'S shouts, and the noises of strife, had brought Eric and Rod on the run. They stopped, aghast. There was nothing they could do. Fighting horses are not to be stopped like snarling dogs, and neither carried a gun with which he would have shot the white horse without hesitation.

They reckoned without the competitive spirit of a stud animal, firm in the belief that all mares are his, who sees another stallion trying to make time in his territory. The palomino ranted back and forth along his prison wall, screaming at every step. Finally, it seemed, the Lady's exhausted cries of distress were too much for him. Not a jumper by training, his leap was not graceful, but it carried him over the fence. Roaring his war-cry, he broke between the beaten mare and her tormentor, and turned to do battle.

The white stud took his superior size to heart, and charged with assurance. The gold stud was not there, nor any place the albino expected him. Quickness of wit, sureness of foot, and white heat of the stallion's pride combined to leave the bulky white horse bewildered, despairing.

The invader rallied, flew at his elusive foe, hoofs flailing, jaws agape. The contest seemed equal for a moment, as the albino's weight landed suddenly on the champion's shoulder, throwing him off balance. He tumbled, and the white animal rose above him, roaring. With a twist of steel-muscled limbs, the palomino gathered his hind legs beneath him and came from the ground as though flung from a catapult.

The duelists faced each other, hoofs nearly touching. Silhouetted in the dusk, they made a picture of fury. The albino wavered, stepped back as his balance failed, and the vengeful golden stud charged to deal death to the would-be despoiler of his right.

Fred Connors and Joel Sims leaped from the ranch station-wagon in time to see the gold and silver stallion down the albino, and with loud triumphant

Infuriated, he reared with a squeal and brought his hoofs across the Lady's shoulders in a ripping blow.

screams, drum his skull into the warm earth with pile-driver hoofs.

The din of battle faded amid clouds of night-obscured dust, as Connors and Sims gesticulated excitedly.

"My men," Sims said, "caught the rascal as he drove an old hose-truck by the west gate. He was scared stiff, and acted so shifty, they brought him to me. I recognized him from your talk, Fred, and that description you had broadcast. Whew!"

Fred Connors broke in.

"He had an idea sort of like the practice of some warring Arab tribes. They turn loose a dead-beat stallion among their rivals' mares and leave the enemy with a crop of poor colts, and nothing to be done about it. Pretty slick. If he had succeeded—" Connors paled.

All glances turned to the two horses who stood peaceably together, the Lady dutifully caring for her suitor's wounds, and nickering in sympathy.

Sims grinned.

"Fred, I think your business here has been nicely taken care of. Let's turn them into the paddock and go up to the house. This has been quite an evening!"

ON the Connors ranch the next months were strained. Tempers were short—with anxious reconciliations and meals were neglected.

The Connors were not the only eager watchers of the Lady's coming motherhood. Surrounding ranchers, and palomino breeders over the State, saw in their experiment another try for the final goal, which many of them had attempted, some with more or less success than others. The untried mare carried a great responsibility, and seemed to have the air of a queen mother, indeed.

It was hot the morning Eric found the Lady on her side in the loose box. Worried neighbors called at intervals, received short, assuring answers. The family, in shifts, paced, fretted, and haphazardly did chores. Sherry noted to her father that the sky was darkening. The elder Connors squinted at the clouds. "Yes, looks like a line squall," he grunted. It was just that.

The air was electric as Eric and the Lady sweated in the combined efforts to bring the colt into life. The storm crashed around them as Eric broke the sac which covered him, and the newborn fought to raise his golden, white-blazed head.

In five hours the diminutive horse colt stood, squealed and stamped in impatience. The Lady guided him to his dinner, and stood calmly, cleaning the shining rump. Sherry and Rod stood wearily, their eyes shining with pride. The baby was a deep, rich gold, trimmed with the silver mane and tail of the royal palomino. There would be no washed-out coat here; the skin was jet, eyes dark brown. His small face showed the chiseled characteristic of his Arab father; his ears were small, well formed. A blaze set off the well-deep eyes, and three stockings reached well to the colt's knees. A shaft of vagrant, after-storm sunlight struck the shimmering gold of his flank, and it reflected a dull gleam.

"He looks like a Spanish coin!" Sherry breathed.

"Yeah, a Spanish doubloon," Rod mused, and he softly stroked the Lady's silken face. "Doubloon," he said again. "Dad!"

"Yes, Rod, what is it?" The older man's face was tired, but triumphant.

"Have you decided on a name for him?"

"No, son. It should indicate his Spanish sire, and his mother's Pirate blood. Have you thought of anything?"

"Sherry said he looked like a Spanish coin, and first thing I thought of was a pirate's treasure of buried doubloons."

"Doubloon, eh?" Fred Connors squinted at the colt.

The beam of sun had worked fully through the window and was focused on the colt's whole body. He stood in the glow, and raised his head.

Connors' eyes lighted. "Eric! Write down in our registry, the crown prince of palominos is—Doubloon!"

There would be no washed-out coat here; the baby was a deep, rich gold, trimmed with the silver mane and tail of the royal palomino.

He wove a fantastic story of how leprechauns had taken charge of the ship

CRAZY CAN

A DISTINGUISHED NAVAL OFFICER HERE TELLS THE STRANGE SAGA OF THE DESTROYER BOWIE AND HER DRAMATIC DEMISE.

by FREDERICK and P. G. BELL

THEY were born on a wintry afternoon when the United States had been ten months engaged in a war to end all war, and when the shipyards on both coasts were working twenty-four hours a day to turn out slim gray destroyers to combat the menace of the Kaiser's submarines.

Side by side they lay, on adjoining ways, awaiting the words that would launch them. Flags draped their razor-sharp prows; and strands of bunting, ranging from forecastle and aft over their lean forms, threw dancing shadows on the gray decks.

Each represented three millions of dollars, fathoms of blueprints, and two months of feverish activity by skilled builders of ships. Outwardly they were identical to the last rivet, tinclad twins that could not be told apart except for the numbers painted in white across each bow, and the name, in small letters, on the stern.

There was nothing to indicate that beneath the red lead and gray paint, far below-decks in that unfathomable place where lies a ship's soul, there existed two personalities that, while intensely opposite, were to hold a deep and lasting affinity. Their lives were only about to begin; but already, unseen, unknown, their spirits were at work. This was soon to be made startlingly manifest.

The diapason of the air-hammers ceased. A band commenced to play, and the militant music of 1918 echoed from the granite face of the dock and floated off across the river. On platforms abreast each bow two young ladies smiled and waved. One raised a ribbon-wrapped bottle, swung it sharply, and in a flurry of roses, music and champagne foam, shouted: "I christen thee *Beverley*."

The *Beverley* trembled, started slowly astern, and slid nicely down the ways and into the river, bringing up properly on the checking lines, and slipping neatly alongside the pier.

A cheer burst from those men who had labored to build the ship in honest fashion. "Another tin-can for the Navy!" exulted the boss riveter. "Another tin-can to fix them subs."

On the adjacent platform the other young sponsor, flushed by the cold and the excitement to the color of the pink roses she held in her arms, prepared to carry out her part in the ancient symbolism of sprinkling wine across the bow, the sole vestige of a ceremony that once included lengthy and sacred rituals, an appeal for divine protection and propitiation for the men who were about to go forth in the frail vessel that lay in its cradle; the last relic of an even earlier custom of offering human sacrifice—the "roller reddening" of the Norsemen; the spilling of warm red blood to appease the appetites of the gods and invoke their beneficence for the crew.

Perhaps the flowers were unwieldy; perhaps the man at the keel was too hasty with his sledge in knocking adrift the wedges that held the forefoot to the ways. Perhaps—and this was the opinion of seamen—the spirit of the ship, unable longer to keep itself in check, overcame the mechanical forces. Whatever the cause, the ship gathered way and moved rapidly toward the river, so quickly that the timbers smoked with frictional heat; too fast for the sponsor to have a second chance to grasp the christening wine.

"I christen thee *Bowie,*" she shouted at the disappearing prow, while tears of disappointment gathered in her eyes, "and may you be of good service to your country!"

A workman on the forecastle, sensing the symbolic significance of the mishap, attempted to haul the bottle up by its silken ribbon and smash it across the bow, or use its contents for a purpose at once direct and utilitarian; but the ribbons snapped and the bottle disappeared in the cold and murky waters through which the *Bowie* was plowing astern at ever-increasing speed.

One by one the checking lines parted. The tugs could not come alongside. There was nothing to halt the rearward progress of the destroyer—nothing save the docks on the opposite side of the river. She plunged into them stern first, snapping the pilings into kindling, and coming to rest in a smoke of wood-pulp and curses.

They brought her back to the builders' yard and set about repairing the damage. It was the well-considered belief of the Irish riggers that she was an unlucky ship. "And what else could she be, and her not christened proper?" "She's a damn' crazy can," said the leading boatswain's mate of the Navy crew that had been assembled. "A crazy can. It's up to us to put the works to her and make her behave."

It was not to be an easy task. No man would ever make the *Bowie* behave, although it looked for a while as though they would be successful, and that having kicked over the traces at launching, she had settled down now to a routine life. They finished her in good time. She and the *Beverley* were commissioned together, and again they lay side by side, the Stars and Stripes floating from their squat sterns. Again, outwardly, they looked alike.

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward

The captain, afraid lest his quarry escape, picked up the phone to call the carrier for assistance.

THEY left port on a bright spring afternoon, Queenstown-bound. The second day out they ran into a blow; nothing specially heavy, just the usual North Atlantic in early spring; dusty enough to send green ones crashing into the charthouse bulkhead, and sweeping the decks of any gear that was not well secured and double lashed.

They weathered this one without serious casualty—all except the *Bowie.* She snapped her foretopmast, and the helmsman had his ribs stove in when a big one carried away the bridge windows. No one connected these incidents—which after all, were not uncommon—with the unlucky birth of the ship or with any peculiarity of her personality. Everyone was too busy getting ready to fight a war to bother themselves with the half-forgotten symbolism of christening rites. Besides, most of them were seasick; and if they cursed the ship and the weather, it was with the detached calm of sailors and not because they regarded their ship as unlucky or exceptionally ill-omened.

Even when the condensers salted up and it looked for a while as if the *Bowie* might make her entrance to the war zone on the end of a tow-line, no one gave it special thought. That sort of thing was bound to happen when ships were turned out like Model Ts on a forty- or fifty-day production basis. . . .

There was one thing about *Bowie* training; either it killed her captains, or it developed them into seamen who

had no fear of man, devil or the combined hosts of the Kaiser's sea forces.

The officer who completed a full cruise in the *Bowie* received the equivalent of a post-graduate course in seamanship, the taming of a shrew, and character-building through self-control. He also became a fatalist.

Less fortunate officers waged unvictorious battle against the termagant spirit of the ship, had themselves carried ashore where understanding surgeons ministered to their ulcers, and dreamed of the day when the craziest can in the American Navy would get her come-uppance.

BUT it was the well-behaved, quiet and orderly *Beverley* that first met disaster, and in a manner that has become a classic in the fleet.

Perhaps a little preliminary background would help to give proper emphasis to the events of that foggy morning in the North Atlantic.

Certainly it should be known that the *Bowie,* from every outward indication, had developed an affinity for the *Beverley* which transcended any relationship ever known to exist between two examples of man's handiwork that could not conceivably possess souls, minds or physical manifestations of thought. In a word, the *Bowie* loved the *Beverley,* and showed it by every means known to a sailor, short of having it tattooed on her steel flanks. In column formation she refused to remain at a proper two hundred yards astern, a reasonably pleasant distance that permits the officer of the deck to keep his blood-pressure within normal bounds. Other ships could be kept at the prescribed distance, but not the *Bowie.* She persisted in creeping up, giving obvious intent of laying her slender bow along the flanks of the *Beverley.* In vain her officers played tunes on the engine-room signal bell; without avail the captain of the *Beverley* sent messages ranging from a whimsical, *"Must you show your affection for us so publicly,"* to a peremptory, *"Take proper distance."*

The chief engineer of the *Bowie* spent less time in the machinery spaces than on the bridge, where he faced a captain whose voice grew shrill as he demanded why it was that he couldn't get the proper number of r.p.m. in answer to signals. It did no good for the chief engineer to bring copies of the engine Bell Book; the captain was past believing visual evidence. He was convinced that there was a conspiracy on the part of the black gang to sabotage the ship. Oh, it was a merry life that the *Bowie* led her skippers.

The only time she showed to perfection was in going alongside the *Beverley,* at a buoy or at anchor. Then she seemed literally to take the bit in her teeth. Despite opposing combina-

tions of wind and wave and utterly regardless of the best conceived maneuvers of her captain she would boil up at dangerously high speed; then, when a smash-up was imminent, throw her stern in, check her headway and come so gently to rest that an egg would not have been crushed between the two ships. Her deck force, at first so terrified that they debated diving over the side, came to expect dazzling performance, and stood nonchalantly on forecastle and fantail, ready to hand the mooring-lines across, knowing there would be no need for heaving lines or line-throwing guns.

On the occasions when she was required to moor to another ship than the *Beverley* she acted like a normal four-stacker, needing the customary skill of helm, engines, lines and bridge orders to bring her alongside.

Then there came a time in late October when the squadron was running out from French waters to make its rendezvous with a troop convoy. On this kind of duty they put themselves athwart the mean course that the convoy would make good in its constant zigzag, and spread out on a scouting line with the ships separated by twice the distance of visibility. In this way nothing could slip through undetected.

The first destroyer to make sight contact sent a brief signal by radio, and the others converged at high speed, coming in from many directions, to the never-ending astonishment of the troops, many of whom were bewildered by the confidence of the navigator in expecting even to find the coast of France. To be discovered hundreds of miles at sea by little gray destroyers that came roaring toward them shaking the sea from their decks was a thrill that brought them cheering to the rails of the crowded transports.

ON this particular morning, a cold gray mist lowered the visibility to less than a thousand yards. The ships closed in accordingly, feeling their way along at eighteen knots, the lookouts gazing ahead through half-frozen eyes, the captains peering anxiously through the open windows of their bridges.

They reached the prescribed rendezvous point. Contact had not been made. Suddenly, from out of the fog, loomed the heavy, ominous bow of a great transport. The *Beverley* lay directly in her path. Then, like a lover who sees his beloved in danger, and rushes instinctively to the rescue, the *Bowie* lunged forward toward the narrow gap between the *Beverley* and the onrushing transport. The captain leaped to the annunciator and threw the engine telegraph to *"Full astern."* For all the effect following he might as well have sipped a cup of coffee. The *Bowie* continued to swerve to the right, seemingly determined to thrust herself between the *Beverley* and the danger that enveloped her.

A few seconds were immemorably crowded with shouts, alarms and the hot impact of steel on steel. High above there came the full-throated blast of the transport's siren. The *Bowie* was tossed aside by her bow wave. The *Beverley*, split asunder by the force of fifty thousand tons at twenty-four knots, rolled over and swirled toward the bottom in a confusion of smoke, debris and hapless sailors.

LATER the Board of Investigation proved with charts, graphs and time records that the *Bowie* should have been the one involved in the collision; she had virtually thrown herself across the path of the transport, and that aboard the *Beverley* it was only through the excited, ill-judged efforts of an inexperienced officer of the deck that his ship, turning in the wrong direction, had become caught by the larger ship's prow.

The chief petty officers of the *Bowie*, conducting their own informal inquiry, arrived at the same conclusion, but expressed their findings in less official language:

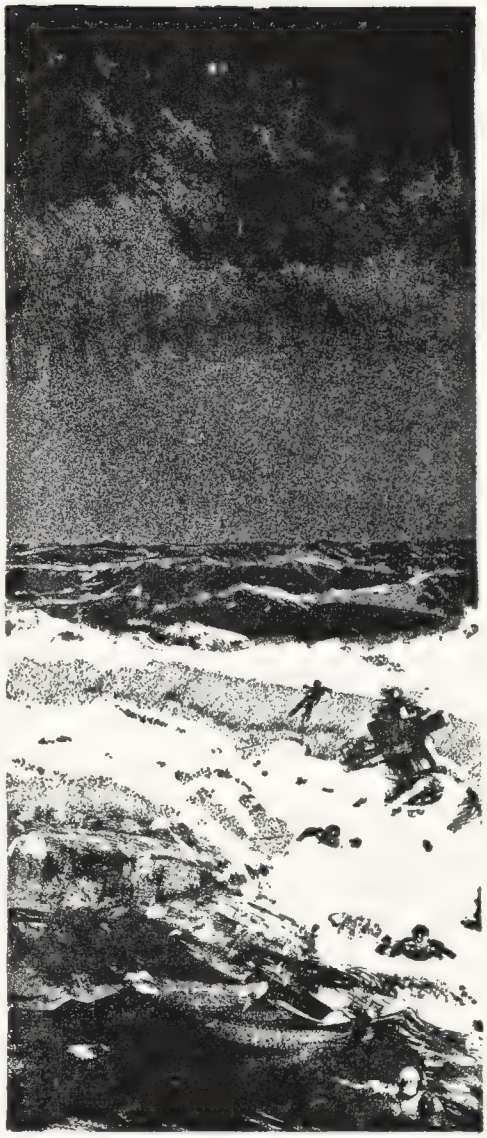
"I knew this crazy can was nutty on the subject of the *Beverley*," said the chief watertender, "but it's carrying things too far when she tries to do a hero-to-the-rescue act. The damned bucket tried to commit suicide." The chief signalman, who had been an eye witness from his point of vantage on the bridge, shuddered, swallowed his fourth cup of black coffee and lighted a cigarette with hands that trembled. "So help me, I never seen the beat of it," he said, and there was awe in his voice; "she acted human, the way she tried to keep the *Beverley* from getting hit. And after the collision you almost felt like she was crying."

"I wouldn't ship over in this can for a million bucks," the chief torpedoman announced flatly. "What do you suppose she'll try to do now that the *Beverley* is gone?" asked the chief radioman.

She did nothing spectacular, but she seemed to move at a slower pace, as though the zest for living had departed. In a way it was a welcome change; certainly it made life more endurable for her officers and crew.

The war was nearly over, and a few months later the *Bowie* found herself laid away in reserve, up the back channel near an Eastern city. There she remained for more than twenty years, her spirit, if it is admitted that such a thing could exist, lying dormant, her future almost certainly the scrap-heap; broken steel to be shipped abroad. . . .

Then the Kaiser's successors broke loose from their bonds and the world again went mad. A distant America



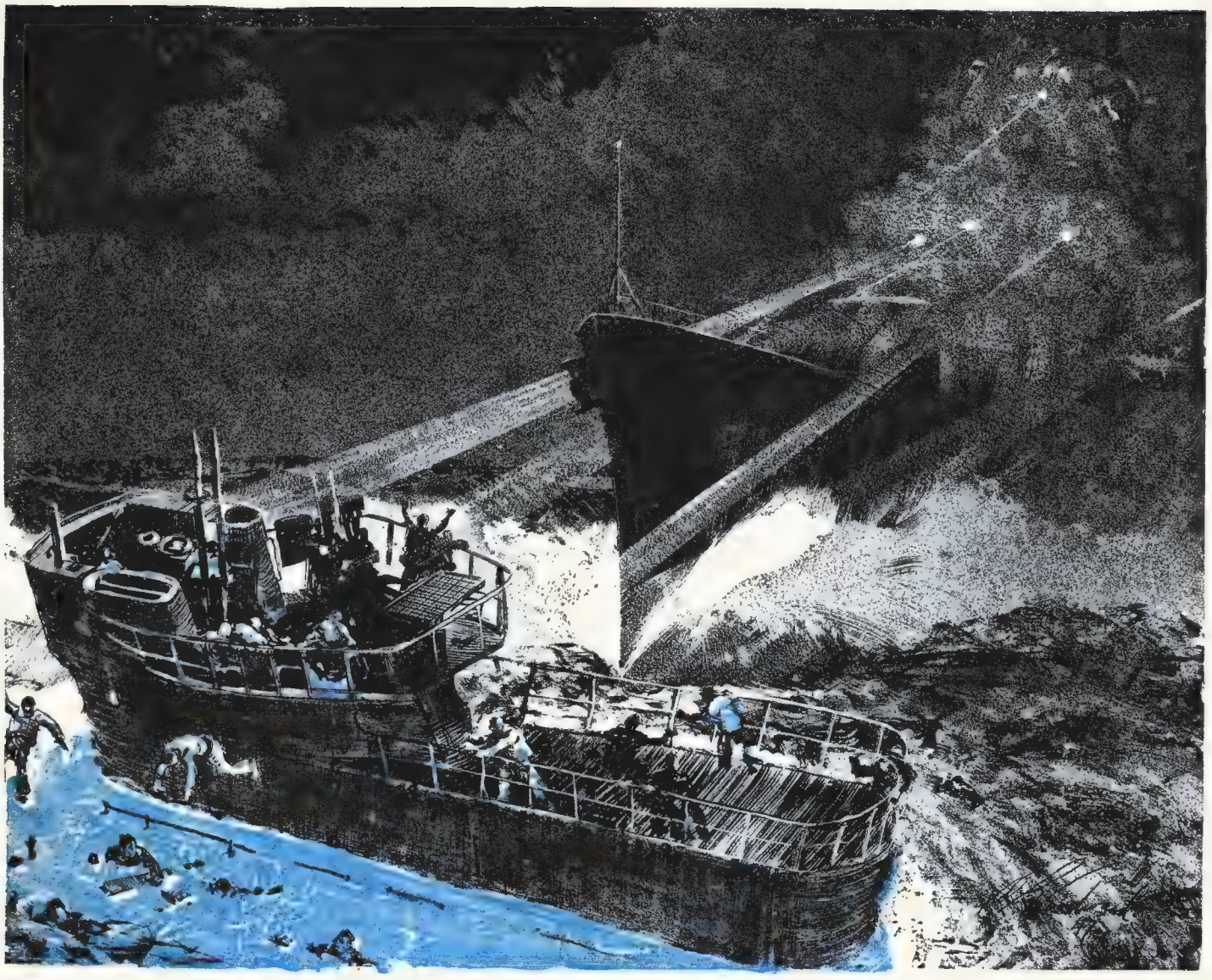
In a climax that

changed gradually from disinterest to concern to immediate alarm. The reserve fleet was brought back to life and once more the *Bowie* found herself at sea, searching for submarines from Germany for the second time in her existence.

But now she was better equipped. She had new undersea listening devices, voice radio, radar, and weapons that transformed her into a fairly modern fighting ship. She was part of a carrier task group that combed the North Atlantic on the lookout for subs. . . .

There came another day in another winter. Again it was a misty gray overcast morning, with the sea retreating in long, low swells before a cold wind from the northeast. A wolf-pack of U-boats was known to be in the area, and the carrier sent a reinforced fighter-bomber patrol aloft.

The search developed no contacts, and at dusk the carrier called her chickens home. The neat, business-



seemed as premeditated as it was unnecessary, the Bowie *rammed.*

like little planes slipped into the landing circle, swung sharp across the stern of their flat-top and came briskly in for recovery. The Group Commander was the last man up, and it was he who spotted the periscope. His contact, the explosion of his depth-charge, and the response of the *Bowie,* were almost simultaneous.

Coming in from her bow position, the old four-stacker picked up the depth-charge slick, slowed to attack speed and commenced tracking. The carrier, with her other escorting destroyer, swung wide to clear the immediate area.

During the next two hours the captain of the *Bowie,* a young reserve officer whose confidence at ship-handling had reached the point of cockiness, learned that seamanship was not a creature of immutable laws. At a much later date he admitted to his officers that he was as bewildered as they at the wholly irrational occurrences of that stormy evening. "Sure, I was the skipper," he said, "and I thought I had control. But honest to God, I found out I was just along for the ride."

The chief engineer was relieved to hear his captain make such candid admission. An introspective person, who brooded when instruments of precision did not conform to known formulas, he was giving very serious thought to consulting a psychiatrist in an effort to clear his mind of certain uncanny thoughts that clung to his brain like wisps of dank moss to the side of a well. But if others, including his skipper, shared his bewilderment, he could accept with a degree of fatalism—though he would never understand—the events that took place that wild night while darkness descended on the ocean, and the wind, increasing in velocity, whipped the sea into endless rows of plunging, craggy ramparts that tossed white banners of foam from their crests like icy plumes.

In her second attack the *Bowie* brought her enemy to the surface. The conning-tower broke water, and the Nazi commander, for reasons known to himself, decided to chance a surface engagement or a speedy getaway under cover of darkness.

This maneuver put the captain of the *Bowie* in a difficult position, for if he followed the U-boat in direct pursuit, he could not use the forward guns, as the forecastle lifelines already had been ripped loose by the sea, and no gun-crew could live on that slippery, pitching deck. To use the galley deckhouse guns meant that he would have to bring his beam to bear, a maneuver that would cause the two ships to draw rapidly apart. Depth-charges would be the best weapon—depth-charges dropped from practically on top of the heavy, dull black body of the submarine. The decision made, he threw his engines full ahead and pointed his bow at the fast-retreating enemy.

It was then that the crazy can reverted to the habits of her youth, and inexplicably, matters were taken from the hands of her captain.

The helmsman was the first to feel the effects of events that were to stamp the memories of the next two hours on the minds of every man in the ship's company. The wheel, for no known reason, went loose in his hands. He swung it to the right; to the left. It spun freely. "Lost steering control!" he shouted.

A phone talker spoke up excitedly "For'r'd engine-room throttle-valve stuck wide open!"

A torpedoman thrust his head in the pilot-house. "Depth-charge adrift on the fantail," he announced tersely. "They're trying to lasso it, but they can't, the way we're bouncing."

NO steering control, half of the engine control gone, forward gun under water regardless of the course steered, main depth-charge racks inoperable from either bridge or fantail! Any one of these casualties would prevent the ship from attaining full combat effectiveness. Pyramided, they should have made her virtually useless in battle. Yet she continued on with vigor, her actions seemingly directed by some inner force, some freakish weird will of her own that caused the men on the bridge to regard one another in amazement and disbelief. The skeptics among the crew were of the belief that the entire two-hour proceedings were matters of luck, accident and fortuitous circumstance. Later, much later, an Irish machinist mate avowed that the little people were responsible for the purposeful maneuvers of the *Bowie*. And he wove a fantastic story of how certain leprechauns had been confined far below-decks, and on the evening of the submarine encounter, they had broken loose from their bonds and taken charge of the ship.

Those sailors who remembered the *Bowie* in her youth shook their heads wisely, and spoke with understanding of the accident that attended her christening. They recalled her affinity for the *Beverley*, and they talked of ship's spirit, which means nothing to landsmen.

The searchlights were turned on, and in the blue light the spume danced like snowflakes. The galley deckhouse guns fired whenever the ship's erratic maneuvers gave them a clear bearing to the target, but they played a minor rôle in the opening phase of the engagement. It was the *Bowie* herself that controlled the attack.

The captain, afraid lest his quarry escape, picked up the phone to call the carrier for assistance. But the Task Group Commander spoke up just then to say that he had found more quarry of the U-boat variety, that he was very busily engaged, and he hoped that the *Bowie* was having good hunting.

In the beginning the ship seemed undecided. She ran in a wide circle, hovered for a time around a certain spot, then returned to her prey and commenced to ride hard on the submarine like a well-trained cow pony. The U-boat was on an easterly course. The *Bowie* shouldered her until she headed north, then kept her on that course, swerving across her stern, first on the port quarter, then on the starboard, nipping at her heels, pushing toward the point around which the destroyer had previously circled.

After two hours of jostling, nudging and zigzagging they arrived at the point where the *Bowie* had seemingly determined that the fight should end. She bore off to the northwest in a sweep that brought her abeam of the sub. The deckhouse guns opened with rapid fire and commenced to make hits. Before long, figures could be seen swarming from the conning-tower and hatches, running about the decks of the submarine, making gestures of surrender, waiting to be rescued from their sinking craft. As if this were an expected signal the *Bowie* swung around, gathered speed and headed in!

To no avail did the engineers clap wrenches on the main steam valves in response to the captain's frenzied order to stop the ship. Straight as an arrow, the *Bowie* darted toward her fast-sinking enemy. In a climax that seemed as premeditated as it was unnecessary, the *Bowie* rammed. It was a good, clean bow-to-beam collision that struck the hull of the submarine which now lay barely awash, in a sinking condition from gunfire. But the *Bowie* was doomed too. "Scratch one pig-boat," the captain reported by voice radio, and added: "Request assistance. We are sinking."

You probably read about the rest of it. How the captain was decorated, and the old *Bowie* received, posthumously, the Presidential Citation. When they gave the skipper his medal and the reporters crowded around to get the first-hand account, and the captain tried to tell them the true story, they listened to him for a few moments, then crammed their notebooks in their pockets. "Poor guy," they said of the skipper as they went ashore to file their own highly colored versions of how the action was fought, "did you hear all that guff he was telling us about how the ship itself did the fighting, and he had nothing to do with it?" "Yeah, a modest Joe, but touched with combat fatigue. He ought to be in the hospital."

IT was an elderly captain in the Navy Department who discovered the coincidence. He was plotting on a chart the known resting-place of the *Bowie* when the figures seemed suddenly to flash a message to a dusty corner of his memory. "Why, that's ridiculous," he told himself. But to rid his mind of a worrisome thrust he went to a row of books that stood on a shelf in a storage room and he opened the one marked "Atlantic Convoy Operations, 1918." And there he found the account of the *Beverley*, and he checked the latitude and longitude of the spot in which she was sunk. And on the chart where he had plotted the *Bowie* he saw that the two points were the same.

Then the captain knew that it was not merely coincidence. He knew that the *Bowie's* end had been of her own choosing, and that in sinking at that particular spot she had at last achieved her heart's desire to be united once again with the *Beverley*.

This, he told himself, requires an extraordinary meeting of the old Queenstown destroyer men. He ran over in his mind the names of others in Washington who would like to join him in raising their glasses to a reunion long delayed, and to a ship that had proved, to those who speak the language of the sea, that she possessed a soul and a driving force of her own.

For this captain *knew*. He had tried to rule the *Bowie* long ago. He had lost. "But," he told himself, "ulcers be damned. I'll drink a double toast to her, the crazy can!"

SPORTS SPURTS

by Harold Helfer

BOB HOPE was an amateur boxer in Cleveland in the '20's and was known as Packy East. . . .

Although it is generally believed that night baseball originated in the last decade, a night ball-game was played at Fort Wayne, Ind., in 1883. . . .

The late Harry Greb, the middleweight prizefighter, would not go to sleep in an unlighted room. . . .

April Star, who won the National Pacing Derby and is one of the country's top pacers, broke a leg when a three-day-old colt, but his owner, R. L. Craig, refused to destroy him. . . .

The ancient Romans played the game of hockey. . . .

Two Wyoming towns, Riverton and Thermopolis, played a baseball game that lasted four and one-half hours, with Riverton winning 40 to 39. . . .

Billy Conn, contemplating a comeback at thirty, has two good examples to think about: Jack Johnson was thirty-two when he won Jim Jeffries' title, and Bob Fitzsimmons won the heavyweight title when he was thirty-five. . . .

Doris Hart, of Miami, one of the nation's leading women tennis players, had infantile paralysis as a child. . . .

Danny Kapilow, top welterweight pugilist, is a manufacturer of children's garments. . . .

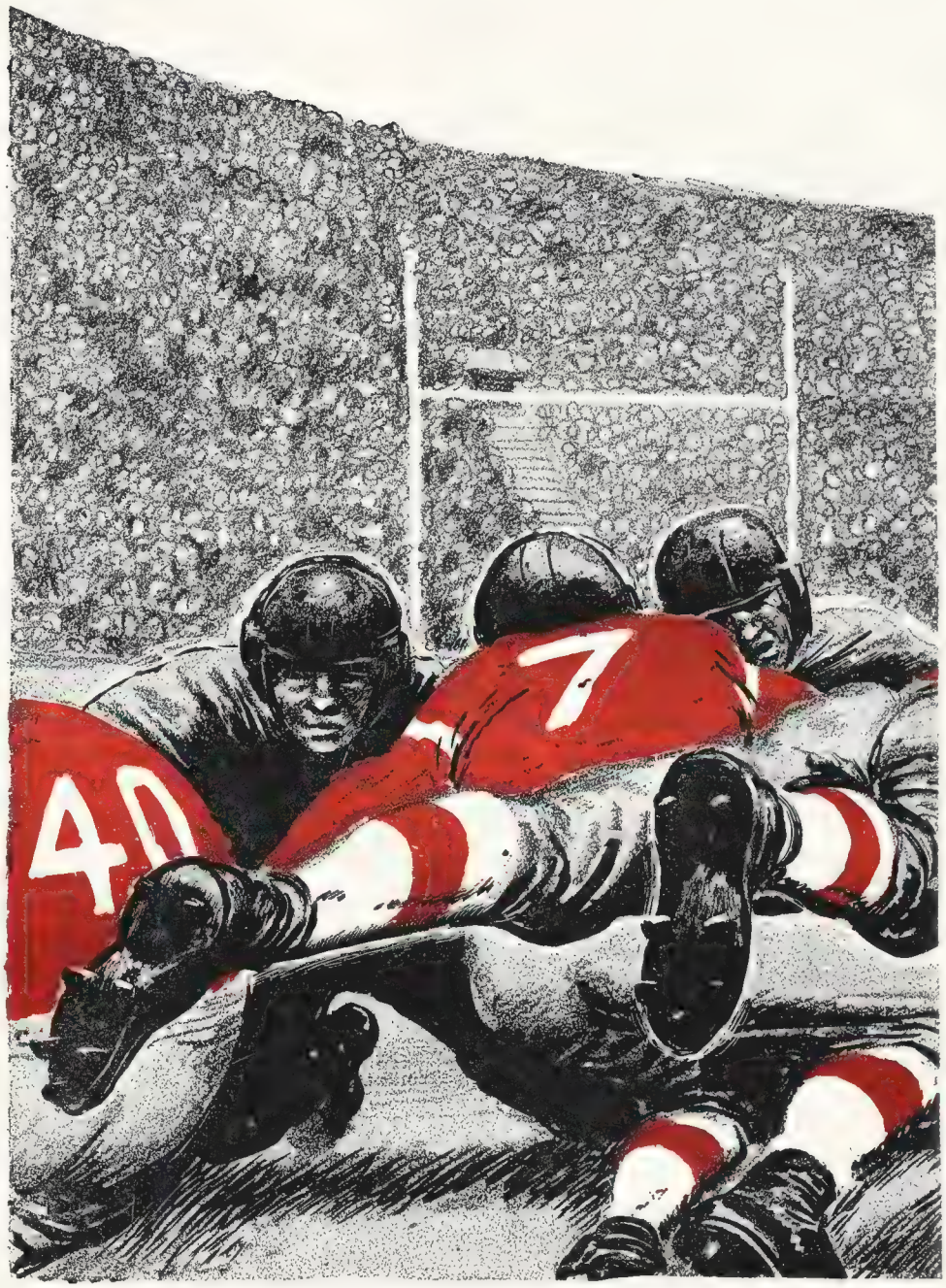
Joe Louis has sold to a soft drink company the right to use his name for a product to be called Joe Louis Punch.

Stout Men & Nimble Ships against ye Armada A.D. 1588...

A small bit of a great story, from Richard Hakluyt's "Principall Navigations of the English Nation." Here illuminated and engrossed by Peter Wells, lately a stout Ensign, & daily growing *stouter*...

"And albeit there were many excellent and warlike ships in the English fleet, yet scarse were there 22 or 23 among them all which matched 90 of the Spanish ships in bignesse, or could conveniently assault them. Wherefore the English shippes using their prerogative of nimble stirrage, whereby they could turne and wield themselves with the winde which way they listed, came often times very neere upon the Spaniards, and charged them so sore, that now and then they were but a pikes length asunder: & so continually giving them one broad side after another, they discharged all their shot both great and small upon them, spending one whole day from morning till night in that violent kind of conflict, untill such time as powder and bullets failed them. In regard of which want they thought it convenient not to pursue the Spaniards any longer, because they had many great vantages of the English, namely for the extraordinary bignesse of their ships, and also for that they were so neerely conjoyned, and kept together in so good array, that they could by no meanes be fought withall one to one. The English thought, therefore, that they had right well aquited themselves, in chasing the Spaniards first from Caleis, and then from Dunkerk, and by that meanes to have hindered them from joyning with the Duke of Parma his forces, and getting the winde of them, to have driven them from their owne coasts."

MIGHTY IMPORTANT, THAT FOOTBALL GAME SEEMED, EVEN THOUGH THE SHADOW OF COMING WAR LAY DARK ACROSS THE FIELD.



You've Got to

THEY stood on the hill, Alice Hale and Babe Young, and below them the breeze was stirring the brown leaves of the campus. She was the daughter of the President of the booming little college and he was the star athlete of them all. He said, "I'm a lucky kid. In spite of John Fort, I'm one of the luckiest kids in the world."

Alice Hale said, "You're a senior, Babe. You shouldn't be called 'Babe' any more. You're too big and ancient." She was lovely, a long-legged girl still tawny from last summer's swimming.

He had curly blond hair and gray eyes and his face was squaring with maturity. He was twenty-two; it was the autumn of 1941.

He said, "It's a great school; your father's a fine man and Bix Mordant is a prince. We have a swell football team and if it wasn't for John Fort—"

"Please," Alice said, "don't find fault! Look at the campus. We helped build all that. . . . I think I'll call you Andy. It's confusing, your father being Andy, Senior, but Babe is too—too juvenile, and, I don't know, kind of tough—or something," she said. "I don't like to think of you as *Babe*."

He looked fondly at her. "Call me sweetheart," he suggested.

She grasped his arm, held it in both slender hands. "This war— Andy, don't you feel it? Paris, fallen into the hands of Nazis! Father has a map with colored pins, black pins for the Nazi armies. . . . The *Greer* attacked by a Nazi submarine. . . . Remember your history, Andy—remember the *Lusitania*?"

Babe said, "How can I forget? I'm already in the Navy." He ran a hand over his bared head. "Look, we've got to keep going. Right now we've got to do our jobs. I talked to Father about it, when I was home. He said, sure there would be war. But it's no good running wild into it. We got a schedule to kill eleven horses—"

"Football!" Alice broke in. "The Japs are taking over the Far East, the Nazis are threatening the world—and we play football!"

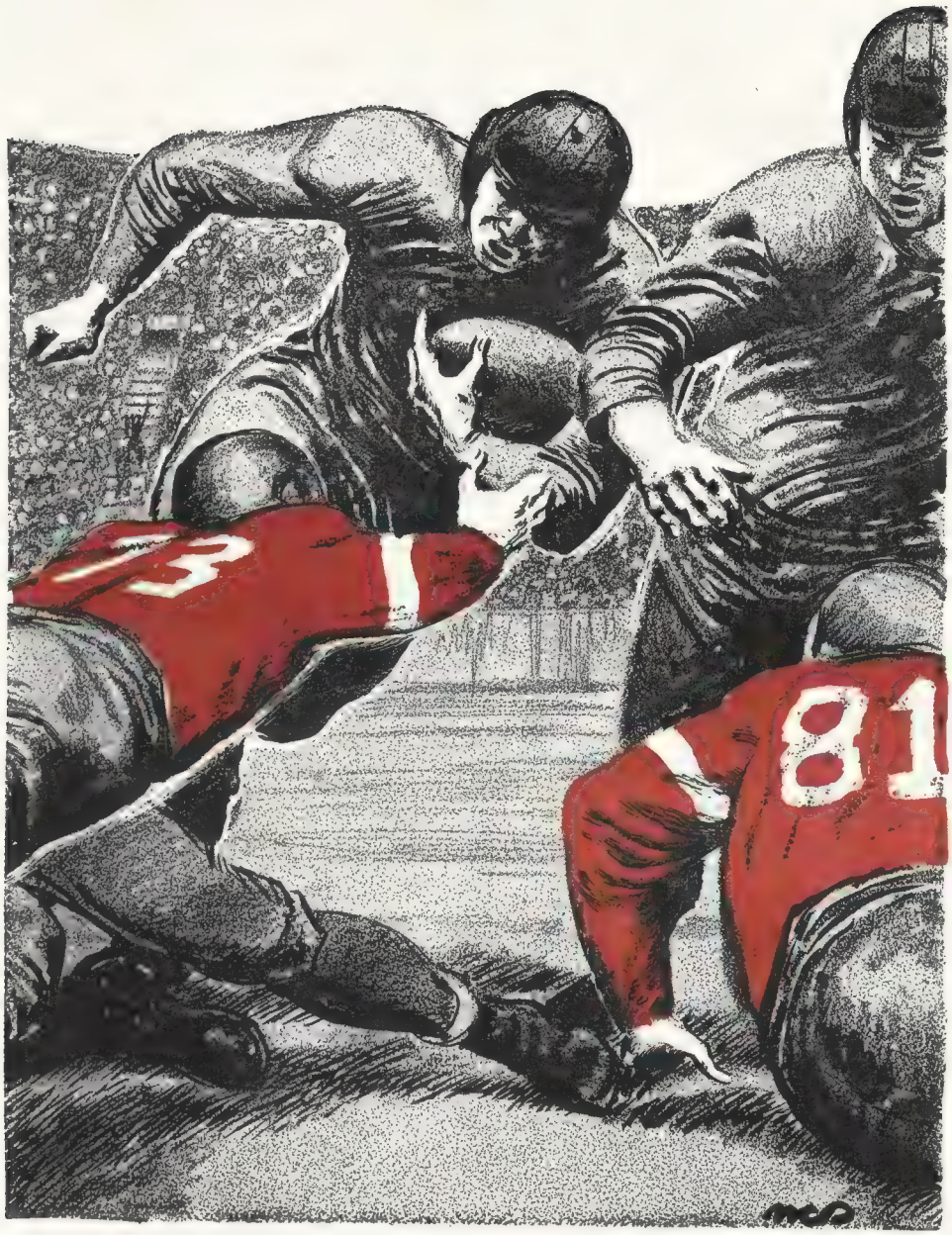
A man was striding up the hill. He was a big man and the noonday sun limned his harsh, strong features and a chin possibly a bit too thrusting. He had cold eyes which softened as they lingered upon Alice Hale. He was John Fort, Head Coach at Midstate College, the man who was given credit for building the small institution's athletic program into one of the most prominent in the United States. He carried, as always, a newspaper opened at the sports page. He came up to them and said sharply, "Young, I want you early at practice. I was against having a back as captain, but they elected you—and we shall have to work together. You haven't been coming early enough."

He knew that Babe stole those moments to be with Alice. He knew a senior schedule was demanding of time, that Babe was carrying a heavy load in order to graduate and go on with Navy training.

Babe said, "I'll be there." He had learned, in four years, to economize on words where Fort was concerned, to bide his time in dealing with the vindictive Head Coach. He had a class now. He looked down at Alice and gravely winked. Fort was always turning up at these moments, when Babe must leave and Alice was due back at her father's office. The girl flushed—she could never quite

Illustrated by John McDermott

by JOEL REEVE



Be *in* There

turn aside the open adulation of the Coach. She was still a girl—and John Fort was a strong man, with strong desires.

Babe walked slowly toward the Science Building which Bixby Mordant had erected. Mordant, millionaire backer of the school, was a man of ideals. He built a gymnasium—and an Arts School; he backed the football stadium—and the Science Lab. And with the help of John Fort and a carefully selected crew of athletic young men, he made the whole thing pay interest on the money invested. He was eccentric, but he was wise. His fat, short body leaned into the brisk breeze and he stopped Babe on the steps of the Lab. There was a man with him.

The stranger was shorter than Babe, but taller than Mr. Mordant. He had a dented nose and his mouth was a straight line across a square face. He was solid, from shoulders to sturdy legs, a middle-aged man with hamlike hands, one of which gripped Babe's digits until they creaked.

Mordant said, "You can't talk to him. He's Potsy Carew—New York Mastodons—part owner and Coach."

Babe said, "Gee! Potsy Carew! You were All-America for three years!"

The man's voice was like a file on the edge of tin. "Glad t' see you, Young. Want to see you play. Bix's right—I can't talk to a college man until he graduates."

"Uh—sure," said Babe. There was a silence which was filled with meaning, with dollar-signs. Babe's eyes grew dreamy. The Mastodons paid good money. There was a draft, but if they wanted him and he turned pro, he would be in the backfield with Hy Stelle and the others. . . .

The Mastodons would know how to trade for him— If they wanted him.

Carew said, "You got a chance for the Bowl this year, huh? If you clean up on this schedule, they can't overlook Midstate."

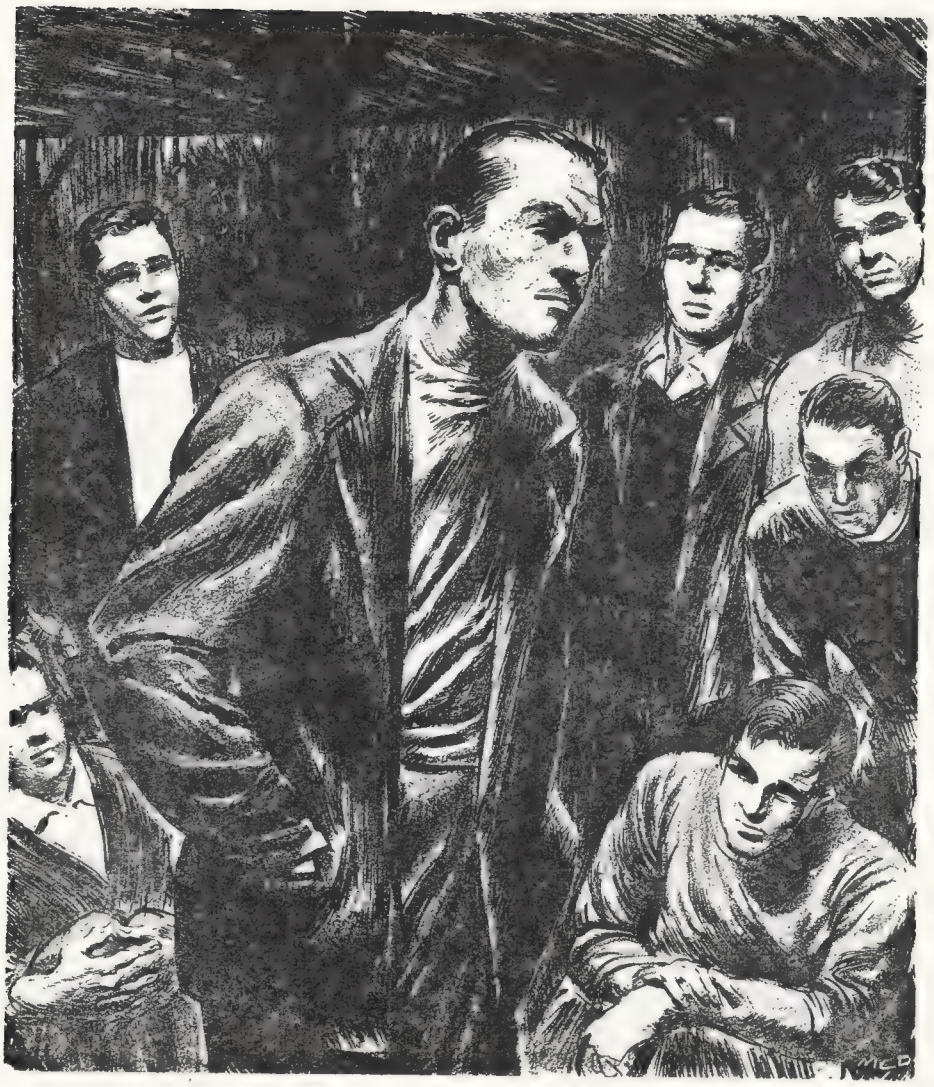
Mordant said hastily, "Too tough. Never was for it. Northern, Hornell, Yarmouth, Pittston, Vale, Slade, Midwest, Southern. Then King. Gorman's loaded at King. Gorman wants the Bowl game."

"Gorman's crooked as a dog's hindleg," Carew grunted bluntly. "They been lookin' him over to coach the Wolverines. I'd hate to see him—"

Babe looked at his watch and said, "Excuse me—but I have a class. I hope to see you later, Potsy. It's—it's an honor." He went up the steps fast. He had, he realized, given his answer. The last three words he had uttered told the story. He was willing—if they would have him.

HE would turn pro, all right. The baseball people were already after him, and he could have a shot at that too. He was inattentive in the Lab., thinking about it. Baseball in the spring and summer, football in the fall and winter. He was very happy about it. And if he made good this year, as key man in the Midstate attack, and if the team could make a showing through that tough schedule—well, it meant an early marriage, for one thing!

The shadow always on the edge of every mind in America that year closed in. Next to him little Bitsy Magin, manager of the team, was whistling the hit of the day, "The Last Time I Saw Paris," that incredibly sad song. Everyone hated war. But the shadow was there, and it was closing in.



Fort bellowed: "You're through, Young! Turn in your suit!"

He shut his mind and turned to the experiment with all his considerable energy. He had to maintain passing-marks—President Hale was firm about his athletes and no bums were allowed in the tough little college.

HITLER declared Russia defeated, a Jap named Tojo rose to power and the House voted to arm American ships. Midstate College took the gridiron and against Northern's tough team they won 7-0. Hornell was young and rough, but Midstate won, 21-7.

Next would be Yarmouth's hungry wolves from up-country, one of the really good teams in the country. John Fort called a meeting on the Monday before the game, to plan the week's work. His chiseled features were grim.

The veterans moved instinctively together in a group, knowing of old the stratagems of Fort's which caused them grief and hard labor. Tipper Gregg was still at end; stocky Jay Jackson played left guard. Swede Sorgerson was first-string center now that Fats Adelberg had flunked out. The rest of the linesmen were new, and very good indeed.

The first-string backfield was Chink Massilon at quarter, reliable Tug Wilson at blocking back, former sub Matt Handley at full—and Babe Young for the working, or running back. Legs Carter, his knee weak from sophomore year, was reserve quarter, but was too light to block. John Hare, Kid Fortesque and Billy Dart were juniors who alternated with the veterans; they were very capable reserves.

Fort said, "We are not scoring enough." He glared at them. "Something is wrong with our attack." He paused, consulting a little black book he always carried. He said, speaking slowly, "For the good of the team, I'm making a drastic change."

The veterans glanced askance at each other. It was coming.

Fort said, "I'm switching the backs. Hereafter John Hare or Carter will do the running."

Everyone gasped. Dozens of pairs of eyes fastened upon Babe Young. He felt it, felt the force directed at him. He instinctively braced himself and moved a step aside, near the far wall. His gray eyes sought Fort's, held them.

The Coach went on firmly, "That gives us more blocking. I want *blocking*. I want men loose when they run. This is no slug-'em-and-mug-'em team. I want scoring plays from midfield, fast men covered by *blocking*."

He went on. He was an earnest speechmaker. Babe stood against the wall, his mind numbed at first, then gradually clearing. Fort had something on his side. John Hare was a scat back, almost as fast and shifty as Babe, but small. Legs was injured and wore a brace, but was a really inspired broken-field runner with his limping, deceptive gait—a man for spots. With Babe playing fifty or sixty minutes, neither Legs nor Hare had much chance to shine in their specialties.

FORT paused for breath. Legs rose, balancing with a hand on big Swede Sorgerson's shoulder. He said gently, "But Babe has to pass and kick. Where's the deception?"

"Young will function as fullback on certain plays," snapped Fort, glaring at Carter, as he did at anyone who dared ask questions at such a time. "Handley will therefore get more chance at blocking inside, where his weight counts. Also—Wilson can sometimes punt. Any further questions?" He dared them, ignoring Babe, thrusting his chin at the others.

Babe would not have asked a question for seven million dollars. He walked out on the practice field and warmed up, punting downfield, his mind going around and around, relieving himself with vicious thrusts that sent the ball fifty and sixty yards in great arching spirals on every kick.

Legs came over and stood near him. The quarterback was Babe's roomie and hometown friend from high school. He murmured, "Fort's fixing you. No All-America for you this year, huh?"

"That part's all right," said Babe. "But the Mastodons've been nosin' around. This may cost me a fortune."

Legs said, "They wouldn't pass you up for this!"

Babe said, "You got a bad knee. You know what blockin' will do to mine. It's not bad yet, the doc says, but it could be."

"Yeah, I didn't think of that." Legs frowned. "And that schedule! Every team tougher than the next. And King tougher than all. They got those Ober twins, they got Willy Devon. They got eighteen coal-miners Pop hired."

Babe said, "My father says never go against the Coach—it'll ruin the team. So I learn to play blockin' back. But, Legs, some day I'll boil over! When I do—"

"No, kid. You got to graduate. This Navy business—it'll be tough." Legs was a serious, clever boy, sensitive as a young plant. "Please, Babe."

"Yeah—yeah," said Babe. "He's callin' us for the slaughter."

They went over and Babe began the hardest lessons of his life.

That Fort was a good coach was not disputed even by his enemies, and he had many of them. He had John Hare primed in advance, Babe realized. The squatty, quick junior knew the job. He went into Babe's place and filled his job with dispatch.

Babe felt strange. He had always spearheaded the attack. The mechanics of blocking were not difficult, because he was an athlete from the soul outward. But the spirit of the position was difficult to catch. He hit his man, rolled him, went downfield and hit another. That he could do. But his heart was not in it.

Fort seemed satisfied. At the end of scrimmage he took John Hare under his wing and left the assistant coaches to work with the specialists in the late drill. Babe got a sub center and halfback and practised kicking placements for an hour, working off the mental fog which gripped him. He was a great place kicker. He put three over from the forty-yard line, then went to the showers. . . .

As always, he met Alice before dinner and they took a walk. They found themselves atop the hill, with the moon low on the horizon. They sat on a rock and Babe extended his slightly stiff knee.

The girl said in a low voice, "Mr. Mordant told me about it."

"What can I do?" Babe shrugged.

"John thinks it will win games," she said.

"I'm being paid to play football here," said Babe deliberately. "This is no hoorah stuff. Mordant has paid us every month. We get tuition and books; we eat. Fort is the boss."

She was silent, staring at the lights as they came on all over the college campus. She said, "I wonder about that. We always thought it was fair. We did not invent college football. We would not have big business in athletics. But it is there and we accepted it. Now I think maybe we were wrong."

Babe shook his head. "I'm not saying it's wrong. I'm saying Fort is wrong. We may win some games—we can't win them all on this schedule. But Fort is building for next year, with Hare. And he is trying to do me in the eye at the same time."

She said, "No, Andy—that's not true. John is all for the school, the team." Her voice was sharp.

Babe fought his mixed emotions to a standstill. He was growing older and wiser about women, he thought wearily. He could not say what he thought about Fort to Alice, close though he was to the girl. After a moment he said, "Yeah—I shouldn't have said that. I guess I'm just a sorehead."

"You'll be in service and it'll all seem childish," she told him. She was frightened, but her voice was firm, assured. "Keep going, Babe. Take this last season and have fun. Please, Babe, for me—"

He said, "Why—you're crying, Alice! Lordy, don't cry!" He put his arms around her and they clung together like children, without passion. He murmured soothingly to her—and they kissed.

They went down the hill, then hesitated, hating to part, clinging to each other's hands. She said, "Block 'em out, Andy!"

"It doesn't sound right, calling me Andy," he grinned.

"You're growing up," she said. "We're all growing up—too fast. It's the world—it's not us. We're being forced, as farmers force a crop."

THE U.S. Destroyer *Kearny* was torpedoed off Iceland; a U-boat sunk the *Reuben James* off Ireland with loss of one hundred lives. Midstate defeated Yarmouth, 30-13. Midstate beat Pittston 14-0. The newspapers screamed that the Russians had stopped Hitler at the gates of Moscow, and on the inside pages they talked of John Fort's revamped club, with the sensational runner John Hare leading them to victory over a great Vale team, by the score of 35-7.

Not much was said about Babe Young, last year's All-America and the nation's leading ground-gainer. He was the Old Reliable, in there kicking and passing—and blocking. Legs Carter alternated with Hare and was brilliant in set-up spots. The line was great and Sorgerson was sure-fire All-America. John Fort was the greatest of colleges coaches, coming up with such a club from tiny Midstate. . . .

Against Slade U., Babe started slowly. He felt logy. Slade was not a great team, just a good solid tough club. In the middle of the first quarter Babe quick-kicked on first down and stabbed the ball out of bounds on Slade's five. The exchange found Midstate with the ball on Slade's forty-yard marker, which was one of Fort's carefully arranged "spots."

Hare was in the tail of the single wing. Babe was in the blocking spot. The play was a delayed buck, then a switch of Fort's own, a sudden concentration of blocking in the secondary to let Hare run. Babe's job was the key job—to get Hare started.

There was a huge Slade tackle, a mean man with his hands. Babe had been eying him for slaughter. The defense shifted; the ball went back.

Babe took off at the tackle. The big man slashed with meaty mitts. Babe caught them on his shoulder-pads and swerved. He got into the tackle's middle and swung him. Hare went by.

Babe's knee buckled. It did not hurt much, it just gave way under the weight of Babe's body and the bulk of the tackle he had hit. Babe lay there waiting, staring at the sky.

He knew what it meant. He accepted it, lying there. The season at blocking back had been as gray as the November sky above. The fun had gone out of it, that was the trouble. He had been moved from a familiar orbit into a dull routine system of hit 'em, run and hit 'em again. It had robbed him of his football spirit.

Fort was staring down at him. Fort was saying crisply, "All right, Young, get up."

Babe smiled. He felt very serene. He said clearly, "Go to hell, Fort."

There was a gasp from the players about him. Babe lay back and waited some more. Fort's face was not angry; it was amused and triumphant. Fort said, "Carry him off. He's dogging it, of course. I expected this. Billy Dart'll take over. I've been getting him ready."

The stretcher-boys carried him off. Bitsy Magin leaned over him and whispered, "You're all through, pal! Fort's got you now."

"Sure," said Babe peacefully. "I know it. It's all right."

In the dressing-room he was restless. He tried to get up. The knee wouldn't work. Dr. Prendergast came in and put him on the table. Expert fingers pressed here and there.

The doctor said, "With a brace, you might play against King."

"Can it be operated upon?" asked Babe.

The doctor looked shocked. "You wouldn't be able to play at all this season."

Babe said, "Look, Doc, I'm in the Navy. I've got physicals to pass."

"I'm in the Navy too," said the school physician with dignity. "I'll be responsible for keeping you in shape. But the game with King—"

Babe refrained from saying, "The hell with it!" He let the doctor bandage his knee and brace it. He took the cane Prendergast gave him and hobbled into the stands. The half was ending, but he didn't want to see the players or the Coach.

The score was nothing to nothing, he saw by the board. Midstate hadn't seized the opportunity, then. He managed to get to the President's box and crawled in and sat alongside Alice.

Her face was very pale. She said, "Is it bad, Andy?"

"Doc said I might play against King," he said satirically.

"Not until then?" she said. "Oh, Babe—Andy, I mean—"

Bixby Mordant heaved into the box. He said, "Sorry, Babe—sorry as all fire. Know what it means to you." His sharp blue eyes were anxious. "Means a Bowl game to us. But hurts you worse."

Babe said, "I'm appreciative that someone knows what it means to me."

They sat in glum silence. The band played. Half-time passed. The team came out. The team finally scored. Wilson missed the conversion. Midstate won, 6-0.

FORT called a meeting that night. They sat in the gym and he raved at them: "It was disgraceful—it was a crime. We should have scored four times—" He went on and on. He worked himself into one of his famous rages. He wheeled and stabbed a finger at Babe Young. "Four years I've put up with your insolence and disobedience! Today you cursed me on the field. I know you're trying to save yourself for the pros, Young! I saw Carew hanging around."

Babe tried to get up. His leg buckled again and Legs clung to one arm while Magin strove at the other.

Fort bellowed: "You're through, Young! Turn in your suit! I won't have a malingering, discontented football-player on my squad. We will elect a new captain tomorrow!" He stamped out, pale-faced.

Babe sat down again; the color returned to his face. The veterans were around him in a grim circle. Legs was the spokesman.

Legs said, "Four years—that's right. We've put up with him, because he was a good coach and he was the boss and we're getting a free ride. But what now?"

Hare's round red face swam to the fore. "Now we keep goin'. We can beat Midwest and Southern—"

"And King?" Legs smiled gently. "Fort began to play favorites only this year. He was always square enough until you and Billy and some of the linesmen got to be his children. Think you can beat King without us?"

Hare turned redder than ever. "You'd quit? Strike?"

Sorgerson roared, "Every damn' senior of us!"

Tipper, Tug, Matt, Jay Jackson rumbled assent. The squad milled like a herd of cattle. The noise ascended to the rafters of the gym, the new gymnasium built by Bixby Mordant. The door at the far end opened a crack. Blue eyes worried in the shadow as the fat man waited.

Babe's voice, as on the field in a tough spot, cut through: "Wait, you characters. . . . *Wait! Quiet!*"

They were silent, staring at him. He was leaning on the stout cane. He was grinning, the old Babe grin. He had been their hero, their leader afield

"Hey! You think I'm too big to be called Babe?"

on a hundred occasions. They had almost forgotten, so lost had he been at his unaccustomed post on the team. Now they stared at him, waiting as he had demanded.

Babe said, "This is a lot of malarkey. Legs is my pal, you're all my pals. . . . But you can't strike, you can't do anything. Bixby Mordant is the reason. Think it over!"

The blue eyes withdrew, the door closed silently. The fat man went out of the gym. The sky was very clear. He looked at the stars. His cheeks were moist; he dabbed at them with a handkerchief and went across the campus he had built.

These were Bixby Mordant's young men. He was a widower, childless. He had had a dream, and he had put his money to work making it come true. He had been practical, hard-headed, possibly unethical at times. He had hired these young athletes to build his dream into reality. He had prayed that the boys would come through for him, clean and decent. . . .

He went into the building which housed Howell Hale's office and dwelling-quarters. He never interfered except in direst emergencies, but now he knew the time had come. He had expected to find John Fort present. He had not expected to see the girl, but it was just as well, he thought.

Fort's hard eyes came around to him, flickered for just an instant. Fort was saying, "That insubordinate young man is a detriment to the school. He cursed me on the field—"

Bixby Mordant said, "Reinstate him. Tomorrow." The blue eyes were like agates, harder than Fort's eyes.

Howell Hale said worriedly, "This could cause a bad situation."

Mordant repeated: "Reinstate him! Play or not, he stays on the team."

Fort said, "I refuse. I will resign."

Mordant nodded curtly. "Wish you would." The dislike he had begun to feel years before, despite the fact that Fort was efficient and successful, leaped into his eyes. "Break your contract. Go ahead."

The girl was pale. "But, Uncle Bix," she said, "if Babe—Andy—really did swear at John, in front of all the boys—"

Mordant was looking at her father. "Agreed, Howell?"

The President of Midstate said, "If we had more facts, Bixby—"

Mordant shrugged his fat shoulders. "Babe Young gets reinstated."

Fort said, spreading his hands, "If I give this to the papers—"

"You'll wash too much dirty linen," Hale snapped, suddenly alert. "And we will repudiate you, Fort. Reinstate Young; let him sit on the bench in uniform. Or you may resign right now, Fort." He had suddenly realized the delicacy of the situation. He knew Bixby Mordant's determination. He sighed, dismissing the irate Coach. Sometimes it was hard to be President of a college struggling to make a place in the sun.

Alice was shaking her head. Bixby Mordant looked at her, then at her father. He said softly, "Young's my favorite—always was. Maybe he's a bit wrong. Betcha he comes out right." He nodded and left them.

UP home in Midburgh, State capital and home of King University, the Youngs lived in a modest home which nestled among trees. Babe limped up the walk and Mary, his mother, came running, arms outstretched. He said, "Surprise! You're prettier'n ever!"

She said, "Babe! Babe!" Then she got hold of herself and said, "You're getting too big to be called Babe."

He went up onto the porch and Harry was waiting. It was Harry's last year at the high school and he was playing a great game at end. He was more like Mary, reedy, slim, straight. His eyes were worried, staring at Babe's knee. He said, "Is it—will you be able to play against King?"

Babe said, "I'll be all right, youngster." He glanced significantly at his

mother. The papers hadn't carried anything except that he was injured. Midstate had gone on to outfight Midwest U., winning by a touchdown. This week it was Southern, a flashy team with a passing attack. Babe thought briefly about Southern while his mother talked lightly on subjects far from football.

The old family car turned into the driveway. Andy, Sr., a sturdy man almost as tall as Babe, got out and hurried to the house. They all settled down around a veranda table.

Babe said, "Harry, this is top-drawer secret: Mr. Mordant sent me here to Dr. Nye, the man who is taking over the Navy program. He's a great guy and he's got something for these trick knees. I've been here every other day for two weeks—on the q.t. Couldn't even tell you-all. I flew up in Mordant's new private plane. Got to go back, but I made him let me tell you."

He recited the whole story. He did not spare himself. He told them how he felt about playing blocking back, how Fort had driven him. He told them about Potsy Carew and about the near-strike.

WHEN he had finished, his father said slowly, "You couldn't block the way you ought, Babe?" It seemed the only part of the story which had registered on Andy, Sr.

"I blocked," said Babe grimly. "I just didn't like it."

Andy, Sr. said, "And you're supposed to be a football star?"

Mary Young said softly, "He said he tried. He did the job."

Harry's eyes were on his father. The kid was miserable, Babe realized.

Andy, Sr., said, "It isn't enough. You've got to be in there. In a tight game it makes a difference. Babe wasn't in there, or he wouldn't have let the Slade tackle hurt him. He'd have knocked him loose, somehow. Babe always could do it, when he had to. He wasn't in there."

They were a close family. They sat and considered, each his own thoughts. After a moment, Mary got up and went quietly into the kitchen and began getting a meal together. Harry had to go out.

It grew dark. Andy, Sr., said, "I'm not criticizin' you, son. But I'm an old athlete, and I know. You did good, breakin' up the strike. Maybe you'll never be a Mastodon. Maybe you'll never play league baseball. But you've got an education—and you've got a war to fight, sure as rain."

"I know," Babe said. "It won't be new, fighting a war. I've been in a state of war for four years—against John Fort. Always on the alert, always knowing he was there, waiting his chance. I busted him once—"

"It's no good, Babe," said his father gently, "fighting your own side."

"Can I love him?" Babe spoke bitterly at last. He had always taken it lightly, laughed it off, even to himself. But it had him now, it was riding him. It was partly his helplessness, his injury, he supposed. It was in great part Alice. She had been different since the blow-up. She had dated him, all right, but she had gone back to seeing more of John Fort. He could not know that she was sorry for Fort, that his defeat by Mordant and her father had enlisted her sympathy.

"No, but you'll have to learn to take orders and obey them, all the way, to the hilt," said Andy, Sr., a trifle sadly, Babe thought. "I was in the last war, remember? This trouble with the Japanese—the Nazis—you're going to be in it soon. Babe, I hate it. But you've got to get over this business, go out of Midstate right. Fort or no Fort, you've got to show *yourself* —you don't have to show me, or anyone else, just yourself. You've got to make it right, somehow. I can't help you. No one can."

Babe cried, "How can I make anything right? I'm only a cripple on the bench. Fort doesn't even give me the new plays—I'm an outsider. He even wanted to take my captaincy away—I don't know what happened to spoil that. I crippled myself working for the team, and now I'm just a stand-in without portfolio!"

Andy, Sr., said, "Maybe there's no answer. But if the situation arises, I hope you're in there, son—for your own sake. All right—supper's ready. Don't worry your mother and don't let Harry down. . . . Not that I've got any doubts, son—I'm just tellin' you."

All the time in the doctor's office, Babe thought of it. His father was always right, he knew instinctively. He sat with his leg in the new electric-ray machine and sweated over it. When that was finished, Dr. Nye examined the injury with deft, delicate hands.

Babe said, "It's better, all right."

The doctor said, "Young, this is experimental. But we need men like you in the Navy, and I'm hoping hard. Young, you may have a new knee there, if all goes well. If you could rest for six months—"

Babe said shortly, "I'll rest. I want that Navy commission."

He went out of the doctor's office. Andy, Sr., was waiting in the car, to take him to the plane. He got in quickly and they drove off. Another car left the curbing behind them and followed.

At the airport the other car drove up. A giant of a man, an ugly man with a prognathous jaw, climbed out and sauntered over to them. It was Pop Gorman, the tough, domineering Coach of King University. He said in his unpleasant, rasping voice: "So you're getting ready for us, Young? I wouldn't, if I were you."

Andy Young, Sr., said, "Take it easy, Gorman. I'd love to get at you." He had a spanner in his hand, getting out of the car.

Babe limped deliberately, going between them. He said, "You should worry, Coach. Your outfit hasn't been scored on. You've got the Bowl clinched. You've got twice the material we have." He added maliciously, "Of course you had all that last year, and the year before—and we clubbed you!"

Gorman said, "I give you credit for that. . . . You can put up the wrench, Young. I'm tough, sure. But this kid beat us two years hand-runnin' and I admit it. I laughed myself sick when he got hurt, sure. I laughed because I knew Fort would've used him to run against us. He had to. We'll kill that tubby Hare boy. My miners will cripple Legs Carter the first time he carries the ball."

"You dirty, rotten—" Andy, Sr., spluttered.

Gorman interrupted, "Sure! That's football. You think Fort is any rose? This is business. Fort's after a pro job—I'm after one."

Babe said, "What? Fort's after—"

"Didn't know that, eh? Just since the Slade game," laughed Gorman. "Somethin' happened up there, didn't it? Remember, I have my spies all over."

Babe said, "You're a slick trick, Coach. I don't see how we manage always to beat you!"

Gorman's face went red. "Damn you! I'm glad you're through, you little crumb. Even if you were the best runnin' back I ever saw—" He collected himself, making visible effort. He said, "No, I can't say that. I wish I had you at King. . . . You were great, kid, great!"

"I wouldn't play for you," said Babe. "And you too can go to hell." He laughed, shook hands with his father, then went to the plane. He limped as hard as he could.

BUT the leg felt fine. It was amazing how the new treatment worked. He went directly to Bixby Mordant and repeated the doctor's words.

The stout man said, "Rest? Of course you'll rest. Want to quit the team? Got to think of the Navy."

Babe said, "I'd like to quit; but I can't."

The stout man was silent. Then he said, "Guess you're right. Guess it's no time to quit—anything."

Babe said, "You've been so damned decent about everything—always." It was hard to say what he meant, to the diffident millionaire. But Mordant patted his shoulder and Babe went across the campus, under a harvest moon.

The school was quiet, for it was late. He stood in the entrance to his

dorm and sniffed the sharp November air. It had been the most important chunk of his life to date, the years here. He became aware of them now, of the past, of the impending future. He could no longer live in his happy-go-lucky way, from day to day. This was it—this was something which would leave its mark.

He turned and went slowly up the stairs, helping himself on the rail. He went into the larger one of the rooms he shared with Legs Carter—senior privilege quarters. He lit a student lamp and the shadows of the furniture were black on the wall. It was fine diggings, he sighed—peaceful, conducive to study and reflection. Midstate was becoming known in a small way for scholarship under Howell Hale's brilliant leadership. . . .

Legs stirred in the next room, appeared, rubbing his eyes. He said sleepily, "I wrote down the new plays. We're not to use them on Southern. I'm defending on passes. Do you think that's smart?"

"Yeah. You can do it," said Babe. That had been one of his specialties, intercepting passes. "You know the fake I taught you."

Legs said, "You're worried. The knee?"

"No. I saw Gorman," said Babe. "He's going all out to cripple you and John. Those big mine boys'll be after you."

Legs said, "Well—got to expect that." His sensitive mouth twitched. "What else, Babe?"

"My knee's almost well. I could play against King. But the doc says if I rest, I'll be okay for Navy. If I get hurt again—"

"I see." Legs turned back for his room. "I can't help you, Babe. You know that."

"Sure," said Babe. "Hey! You think I'm too big to be called Babe?"

Legs laughed. "Ruth never was." Then he considered, in the doorway. "Well, it doesn't quite suit you. But you'll always be Babe, I reckon." He disappeared.

Babe sat studying the new plays. Legs was clever at diagraming. They were all very clear. It was two o'clock before Babe felt sleepy.

THE tall Tennesseean who was Secretary of State presented final terms to Kurusu and the other bobbing, smiling little yellow man. Southern came to Midstate; Legs Carter intercepted two passes, and Midstate won, 13-0. Babe sat on the bench. He watched his team with careful, narrowed eyes.

King played Yarmouth that day. Pop Gorman turned loose his dogs, and the Ober twins behind a ravening line of ruffians slaughtered their opponents, 56-0. Gorman announced after the game that King would accept the Rose Bowl bid, when it came, which would be after the Midstate College game. He said simply that King would defeat Midstate by at least four touchdowns. Every sports page in the country carried this bold statement.

On Monday Babe appeared on the field in full uniform, with pads. He went carefully about the business of place-kicking goals from difficult angles. It was his right leg which had been injured, which was all right, because his left leg did not buckle under him and he could get off the kicks.

Fort had made the practise for that week secret, with all outsiders barred. He watched Babe out of the corner of his eye as the big former running back warmed up, running easily around the field. Babe gave no sign that he knew he was being observed.

Legs Carter jogged with him while Massilon ran the Varsity. Legs said, "The boys are jittery. They know they can't beat a team that walloped Yarmouth by that score."

Babe said, "I thought I might stick in a goal from field if it is close. Tell them that."

"It might work," said Legs doubtfully. He went back to the team. . . .

Babe tried his leg in secret, going to the showers early. He was doing a deep knee-bend when Bixby Mordant came in, silently as always. Babe straightened and said, "You see? I'm going up tomorrow night for another baking. It's going to be good."

Mordant said, "Can't play. Not in the cards. Navy needs you."

Babe said, "Maybe a placement. If I'm needed." When talking with Mordant he fell unconsciously into staccato phrasing, imitating the millionaire.

"No," said Mordant.

Babe said, "We can't quit—anything. Remember?"

Mordant said, "Fort won't do it. Fort—"

Babe said, "Four years, Mr. Mordant. . . . I'm going to look into something when I go home. It may be important."

Mordant said, "Behind you. All the way. But be sure. Of anything you learn."

Babe went home in the plane. He got hold of his kid brother, Harry. He talked long and earnestly in private with that wide-eyed youth. Harry nodded agreement and Babe went back to school and plugged along at his place-kicking. He had always been good. Now he was becoming perfect in sweeping the ball between the posts. Even Fort stared, impressed. . . .

Every night that week the little plane flew Babe Young to Midburgh. Harry had taken a trip to New York, with funds provided by his brother, he informed his parents. It was business, he said importantly, secret business. He came back in time to meet Babe on Friday, the night before the big game. The Youngs were driving up to Midstate and Harry was going to stay home, as he had a high school late-season game to play for the State Championship. It was December the sixth, but the weather was like mid-November, cold but crisp, and the sun promised to shine on the red-letter day for Midstate football.

Harry delivered a note signed by none other than Potsy Carew. Babe put it in his pocket, clapped Harry on the neck, hugged him and got into the plane. He could see the bus carrying the King team on the road as they took off. Tomorrow was the day.

He had stopped thinking about himself back along the line some place and with a start he realized he had scarcely thought of Alice this week. He had not seen her in ten days, not even around the campus. He had missed her, but by now he was accustomed to missing her and the pain was only a dull ache. He had almost decided she was not for him, but that was so awful that he dared not continue to believe it. . . .

He got out of the plane and said good night to the pilot. He walked across the campus. He did not limp, although he had been careful to limp when in Midburgh, lest Gorman have a spy watching him. There was a light in the window of Hale's house and he walked up the steps and rang the bell.

IN the living-room upstairs there was a fire. John Fort stood beside the fireplace and Alice sat in a chair and stared hard at Babe. Howell Hale came in and paused, regarding them with calm eyes.

Babe said, "I can play tomorrow."

Into the silence John Fort blurted, "They told me— I thought you were not going to play."

Babe said coolly, "Doc Nye kept you informed. You knew my knee was mended, knew that it was strong enough."

Fort said, "But you—" He stiffened. "I understand your commission in the Navy depends upon the condition of your knee."

"There'll be a lot of just plain gobs in the war, when it comes," said Babe. He added hastily, "And maybe it won't come for awhile and Prendergast can fix it again. I'm no martyr. And I can play, all right," he finished lamely. He felt a little foolish, with Alice sitting there, silent.

Howell Hale took a step forward. "Andy, it's fine of you to offer. But I don't think John should accept. After all, a football game—"

"A Bowl game—eighty thousand dollars," said Fort. "I never thought

In a rasping voice Pop Gorman said: "So you're getting ready for us, Young? I wouldn't, if I were you."

he'd— All right, Young. You ask to play?" His hard eyes were frosty, but there was a gleam in their depths.

Babe said, "Legs kept me up on the new plays."

Fort's eyes wavered. He had erred there, in view of this circumstance. He said, "Er—good. You will play."

Babe said, "Thanks. Good night, Alice. Good night, sir." He bowed, a bit awkwardly, but with dignity. He walked firmly down the stairs and out into the night.

IT was the second quarter. Babe still rode the bench. On the field there was mayhem, almost murder. His gray eyes were fixed on the giant linesmen in green and gold. King had already scored one touchdown, with Willy Devon, their crashing fullback, smashing over from the five. It was 7-0 and Midstate had the ball on their own forty.

Massilon called the signal. Swede centered the ball. It went back to John Hare. Dart and Tug Wilson threw in early blocks. Chink led around the tackle. Hare swung inside and tried to slip through a hole.

There was a pile-up. Babe came off the bench, watching, unable to follow the linework of the King men. Fort was standing, fists clenched. Fort's face was pale and the ridges of his jaws were prominent.

Hare did not get up right away. When he did he reeled about like a drunken man.

Fort snapped, "Carter!"

Babe got up. His leg was bandaged beneath the stocking so that it showed, and he limped a little. He said softly, "Not Carter. He almost got it sophomore year—remember, Coach?"

Fort said, "Sit down, Young."

Babe went close to the rock-faced man. He whispered, "I've got a note from Carew in my pocket. Says you tried for his job. Said you'd tried everyone and the Wolverines were going to take you if you got this game. You're through here, Coach, you know that."

The trainer was helping Hare off the field. Babe said, "Those miners will kill Legs. He's too thin and light."

Fort said, "You dare to blackmail me, you—you—"

Babe said, "Well, I figure it's an even break, Coach. You've got to use me—I've got to try to get us in that Bowl game."

Fort said, "If there was any other way—*any* other way—"

"It'll be great, playing for the Mastodons, against your Wolverine teams," Babe told him. He had his headguard on. "Wish me luck, my dear pal!" He shoved Legs gently back toward the bench and went onto the field.

The Midstate stands arose as one. His mother and father were there, in the box with the Hales and Bixby Mordant. He saw the stout man struggling to get down over the concrete wall, the cheer-leaders reaching to help. He laughed and kept limping toward the team.

He had gone in without instruction, proving how completely confused he had left John Fort. He said to the boys, "Well, here we go. I'll take Hare's plays—and then we'll switch and I'll block. How's that for mixing 'em up? Chink can carry, and Tug, and we'll all have fun."

"It ain't football," said Matt Handley, the sweating big fullback. "But by Harry, it's about time we had some fun."

"These guys are rough," said Sorgerson. His mouth was bleeding a little. He showed Babe a skinned knuckle and added. "Me, I'm rough, too."

Babe said, "You run it, Chink. Legs'll be in to relieve you, but not until we operate a little on these clunks."

It was second down, nine to go. Chink said promptly, "All right. Let's try that 96 play and put a little into it."

Babe went into the slot, his old place. It was like coming home. He took the ball from Sorgerson. He faked and darted outside. His knee was fine, as good as ever. The old speed was his again. He shot outside of tackle as Tug and Chink blocked. He saw Matt hit the end and downfield old Tipper Gregg was knocking Mike—or Pike—over for a loop.

He slid past the big slow miners. He jabbed one of them with a straight arm that drew blood. He tincanned inside, picked up Jay Jackson for protection and aimed back at the sideline. Chink cleared a little path. He ran over midfield and down to the King forty. The other Ober got him there.

Chink was ready, screaming for the line-up. They shifted into the T, with which they were not too familiar, but which eliminated the huddle when they got going good. Matt Handley plunged between two of the hulking King linesmen for four yards.

Chink lashed them, going into the same formation. Matt again took the ball from Chink, faked at the line. But Matt gave a hand-off to Babe just then, at the last possible second, and Babe faded two yards, then three more, looking his field over.

Tipper loafed, then sprinted. Babe laid the pass down a yard ahead of a stretching Ober twin. Tipper crossed, took it like picking daisies and raced over the goal-line.

There was silence—then there was more noise than Mordant Stadium had heard to date. In the midst of the sustained roar from friend and foe alike, Babe teed off and booted the conversion.

It seemed very simple. It seemed as though with Babe Young in there the King team was helpless. But Babe knew a lot better than that. They had capitalized on surprise attack and they had made it pay. But now there would be the fiddler to pay. . . .

They kept coming through and hammering at Babe's leg. He sturdily refused to go back in the safety slot which Legs came in to take over against possible King passes. He stayed on the left wing, and Pike Ober threw the book at him. They were supposed to comprise the best backfield in the country, the veteran, scarred Obers, Willy Devon and swift Slim Pike. They kept coming behind the great oafs of the line and flinging themselves at Babe's leg. On the sideline Gorman kept warming up sub linesmen, sending them in with exhortations—get that Young at any cost.

IT was very rough. It was the penalty for being a star. Babe took it. He stayed in there and they ganged up on him, they rolled him, they pinched him. Amazingly, they didn't foul him. It took him some time to figure that out. Then he realized that a dirty team seldom makes a Bowl game.

It did not help much. They were big and they kept coming. The Midstate line dug in on the twenty. It was first and ten and King roared, but Midstate held. It was the first time they had held.

King came again, Mike Ober carrying behind Devon and brother Pike. Babe foresaw this one. There was a little hole, but Tipper covered the flank, making it sure for inside tackle. Babe took off.

He got in there like a cork. He bounced, took off. He hit the trio around the ball. He smashed them with everything in his brawny body. As all went down, someone pounced on his bandaged leg.

He got up without haste. He limped in a circle, waved the trainer back, grinning. Time was running out in the half. Legs came in and whispered, "Are you going nuts?"

"Play it out. We got to get Fort into the Bowl," said Babe.

"You *are* nuts!" said Legs.

King was coming again. Sorgerson, backing the line, diagnosed the play and shouted. Babe scrammed in, Sorgy threw himself. Devon got only three yards, making it fourth and six.

There was a time out. Babe stayed apart, sitting down, rubbing his leg. The Obers were arguing. Finally they decided. Babe called to Sorgerson, "They'll boot one."

The center didn't believe it. But one Ober held; the other removed his helmet, swung his leg as charging Midstate men leaped to block the kick. Babe went in too, jumping fruitlessly, and Devon hit him. He came down and Pike was under him. His leg twisted and he almost fainted. One of the Obers said, "So you got him at last! Good!"

He went off. Billy Dart came in. He went to the showers and the half ended with the score 10-7, which was closer than Pop Gorman liked. . . .

These were the closing moments of the game. It was still 10-7. Babe stood at midfield and shivered. It was Midstate's ball on the King thirty, by virtue of a long pass to Tipper. But the team was crocked.

Legs was almost done for. Tug was staggering. Fortesque had taken Matt Handley's place. The line was green with subs.

King still had big men. The Varsity was worn, with Sorgerson's slugging and the valiance of Jackson and some others. But they were big and the backs were all still in there, the Obers and Devon and Pike. They were smart, they expected a trick. Tug had to call time out.

A short figure came from the bench. It was John Hare. There was a bandage under his headguard. He reported, came to Babe and said, "Fort said for me to take over." Tug had to be helped off.

Babe said, "You all right, John?"

"Yeah," said John. "I'm all right." He did not look all right.

Babe said, "Okay, John. You carry on." He went to the blocking spot. Legs gulped, called a signal.

It was Babe's own number. But there was John Hare in the slot. It was an in-and-outer, a hard play on which to block. John Hare put the ball under his arm and started. Legs followed the play.

Babe took the tackle and elbowed him. Hare darted by. Babe cut the angle. He got downfield even with the scuttling Hare. One of the Obers came in. Babe hit him with a rolling block. Ober hit the dirt.

Devon hit Hare a glancing blow. The squat man stumbled. Babe was in front of him like a flash. Hare cut for the sideline.

The other Ober and Pike got there at the same instant. They converged, menacing in a tight pincer. Hare was trapped.

Babe got himself together. He took a great leap, hit dirt, bounded into the air. His body stretched like a diver's, arms folded in. He flew into the faces of the King men.

Ober got tangled in his legs. His torso hit Pike and the pair seemed to fold. They went down. Hare started past. He got to the five.

Someone nailed Hare from behind. Beneath the two King backs, Babe said calmly, "Oh, well, we got time."

Ober said, "Damn you!" and his twin echoed the sentiment. They unpiled. King took time out.

BABE walked up and down, to keep from stiffening. Legs walked with him. Legs kept saying, "You ought to carry."

Babe said, "They expect me to. Me or Matt."

"Yeah," said Legs. "I know. Yeah—" He used bad language. Time was called back in. The King team was bigger than a pro outfit, digging in for that toughest of last-ditch defenses, inside the ten-yard line.

Legs brought them all up, into a box formation. This was a play they had not used, one of the new ones. Babe remembered the diagram Legs had drawn so carefully. He crouched in the key spot, the slot. Hare was on his left, a step wide and even with him.

Sorgy snapped the ball. It came to Babe. He ducked and sprang toward the line. At the same instant he handed the ball off to Hare, with Legs screening the maneuver.

The two lines smacked together with force enough to kill a man caught between. There was clutching and lunging and some punching where it went unnoted. Then there was a great cry.

It was an Ober, yelling. But Babe was through; he picked out the nearest back and let him have it, a beautiful cross-block. He got up and went on. doggedly. He smacked another back. A linesman threatened; Babe slammed into him, gloriously enjoying it.

Hare was circling the end, stripped, alone. He cut behind Tipper, who

had checked for that purpose. He came down like a scared rabbit. His pink face was not unrabbity, Babe thought, working over. Devon was about to make the tackle. Babe let out his last vestige of power.

Devon and Babe went down. Hare scrammed over that fat white line.

Babe got up. He went back, and now he was not limping at all. The muscle hurt a little in his leg, but that was nothing. He coolly converted, with the crowd going crazy in sections.

A gun went off. The game was ended. Midstate College, four years old, a tiny upstate school with a small enrollment of tough lads, was in the Bowl—if they were invited. . . .

Legs said, "He limped on the left leg. Gorman saw him. He always limped on his left leg in Midburgh. He bandaged that leg and wore a tight brace on the bad leg. It's an old trick. But it worked."

It was nine o'clock. They were in the gym—the squad, Howell Hale, Babe's parents, Bixby Mordant, everyone. Even John Fort. Alice was apart from the crowd, listening.

Legs said, "He blocked us into that touchdown. We'd agreed to play for a tie. He could easy kick the goal. But he blocked us down there."

John Hare said stoutly, "I was slow and scared and hurt. Babe blocked me in there, all right."

Fort said nothing. Bixby Mordant said nothing. Howell Hale made a little speech. Then Babe came in with Dr. Prendergast. The examination was over. Everyone stared.

Prendergast said, "This young guy is tough. He went against my commands, and against his own wishes, I know. That's the hard way, folks."

"How's his leg?" demanded Howell Hale.

Prendergast grinned at Babe. He said, "They ought to get another nickname for you. Not Babe—you're too stubborn. They ought to call you Mule, or Toughy. Your leg is as good as mine, right now!"

Babe said humbly, "I'm a lucky kid. . . . Hiya, Andy? Hiya, Mary! How did Harry make out?"

"Harry's team won." Mary was crying a little. "You're all right, son?"

"Lucky," he said. Bixby Mordant came up, and he said to Mordant: "My kid brother went to New York and got the dope from Carew. I had to make Fort let me in. He got what he wanted out of us."

Mordant said, "Fort confessed—he asked to be released. Come here, Lucky."

They all met near the door as the meeting broke up in unconfined joy. Fort's face was stiff, but his manner was dogged. He stood straight as a ramrod and said, "We did not get the Bowl bid. But I've been offered a job with the Wolverines next year. I want to thank you for your coöperation, Young." And he held out his hand.

The handshake was not very warm. It broke instantly and Fort turned and strode from the gym.

Babe said, "That cost him a lot."

But people were going. Somehow there was only Alice left. She looked at him and said, "You did your job, Lucky. That's not an apt nickname for you, because you worked. But it will do. They'll all call you that, now. You can always tell. Lucky Young—the Mastodon star, the baseball-player."

He said, "You don't like it, do you?"

She stretched out her hands. She said, "Oh, Andy, what does it matter? There's bound to be war. . . . It's not John, not ever. It's you, always you! What does it matter?"

He clutched her, though not with any grace or assurance, and he muttered, "But I am a lucky kid, at that!"

It Could Happen Only in Brooklyn

(1870 Version)

by Harold Helfer

WHAT baseball team has compiled the greatest winning streak? The potent New York Yankees? Or perhaps the almost-invincible Philadelphia Athletics of fifteen summers ago? Or perchance the Giants under McGraw?

Nope, it was the Cincinnati Reds—or Red Stockin's, as their name was always spelled out in those days.

When, on June 14, 1870—that's seventy-seven years ago, as the leaves on the calendar fall—the Red Stockings encountered the Atlantics of Brooklyn, the Cincinnati lads had accrued a winning streak of ninety-seven (that's correct, ninety-seven) consecutive ball-games. And how they came to lose that contest to the Brooklynites is quite a story.

The game was played in that wonderful borough of boroughs, and the Brooklyn fans were every bit as fervent and rabid as they are today.

Indeed, nine thousand Brooklyn humans streamed out to see the game, paying fifty cents a head, and in those days that was an almost unbelievably sensational turnout.

Just like today, despite the devotion of its fans, the Brooklyn team is not always considered to be the best in the land; so on that particular day the general consensus was that the Red Stockings were definitely the superior team. In fact, the Cincinnatians were odds-on favorites to win.

But that didn't keep the Brooklynites from putting up an estimated one hundred thousand dollars on their local heroes, and it is possible that the money invested had something to do with their enthusiasm and fervor as well as their natural patriotism.

Anyway, the tremendous rooting that the Brooklyn fans gave their team seemed to have its effect, and for nine innings the Atlantics fought the Red Stockings to a draw, the score being five to five. And that's the way the tenth inning ended too.

But the next inning the Red Stockings surged to the fore. They chased two runs across the plate. The score was now, Red Stockings, 7, Atlantics, 5.

A tremendous sigh heaved itself across the stands. But this was soon followed by a mighty tide of fervent entreaty and lusty encouragement. The Atlantics had come to life too. One run had scored. There were two out, it was true, but the bases were loaded.

With the tremendous cheers of the borough faithful ringing in his ears, the Atlantic batter stepped into the ball that came across the plate with a mighty swing. It was a powerful swat—the only trouble with it was that the ball went mostly up instead of far and away. It was an easy catch for the Red Stocking left-fielder, and he waited for it with peaceful patience to make its descent into his waiting hands.

Not so patient were the Brooklyn fans. Nor so peaceful, either. They were out of the stands and surging toward the left-fielder, murder in their eyes and mayhem in their manner.

The left-fielder kept one eye on the ball and one eye on the rampaging fans—for as long as he dared. Then, deciding the time had come when discretion was the better part of valor, he broke and ran for his life.

The ball proceeded to fall to the ground uncaught. The three Atlantic base-runners crossed home plate.

It is not recorded whether the scorer was a Brooklyn fan, but he ruled that inasmuch as the ball had not been caught, the runners had a perfect right to cross the plate; and to this day that's the score that remains on the record books, Brooklyn Atlantics 8, Cincinnati Red Stockings, 7.

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

IN SANTA FE, THE STORY OF THIS MALIGN AND MAGIC JEWEL, WHICH BEGAN IN ANCIENT EGYPT, COMES TO ITS STRANGE CONCLUSION... A NOVELETTE,

The Passing

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

SIR EVART BUCKSON was one of those Englishmen whom John Buchan loved to depict—a large man, powerfully built, as agile in his thirties as a boy of eighteen, and well poised. He had calm features and keen hazel eyes. He looked up sharply as Bill Stuart entered the room of his New York hotel.

"I've seen you before," he observed. "How d'ye do? Stuart is the name?"

"Yes, sir. I was in Egypt with the American Air Forces—you had command of the field where we were putting our ships together and making deliveries."

The calm features lighted up. "Oh, yes—I remember. You're the chap who got hold of a mummy somewhere and dressed him up at the wheel of a plane and raised no end of a riot! The war seems long past now, eh?"

Stuart assented, laughing. "I saw in the papers you were stopping here, and took the liberty of calling."

"Right. Glad you did. A spot of brandy, what?"

"Thanks, no. I didn't come to beg a drink," Stuart replied a bit stiffly.

Sir Evart gave him another look—level, guarded.

"Aye? Sit down, lad. Let's have it."

Stuart lighted a cigarette.

"I've had an airfield job since the war—top mechanic," he said. He too showed level-headed poise. He had a quiet manner, but his dark eyes held a flash; his features—the right cheek lightly scarred—were crisp, his lips tight and thin. "I've a couple of sisters out West; no one else. The job folded last week. I've hung around town, hoping to get a word with you. That's the situation."

Sir Evart nodded, and wisely said nothing. Stuart went on.

"You see, I'm not too flush; but I have enough. I had a great pal in Egypt named Morrison; he was killed later over Tunis. A pilot—his sister lives here in town. She has a batch of stuff he sent home from Cairo—relics and what-not. He wrote her that some of them might be valuable. You're a world authority on Egyptian antiquities, so I wondered if I might ask you about two or three of them. You see, Miss Morrison could use money, but I haven't the faintest notion where to sell 'em. I tried the Metropolitan and got laughed at."

He leaned back, finished.

Sir Evart smiled.

"Stuart, let me be mercifully cruel. Your boys in Africa got rooked, no end. They went out and bought curiosities—knives, jewels, everything, and were stuck with the finest lot of fakes ever assembled. That's one thing; here's another: My job's folded too. Our people are getting out of Egypt, or have got; my Helwan museum job was washed up with the rest. That's why I'm in your country, lecturing. Oh, I'm not broke! But we're

"It'll be a chance shot, anyhow," said Lattimer. Stuart's nerves leaped; he lifted the rifle.

of the Sphinx Emerald

on short commons in England, you know."

"I'm asking for advice, not help," said Stuart.

"Quite; don't flare up, my lad. You're welcome, God knows, to the advice; I'm trying to break things easily, telling you not to expect too much. Here, take one of these."

Stuart accepted one of the opulent Abdallahs offered him.

"There are several things your pal might have got hold of that'd mean a bit of luck," pursued the Englishman, "and I'm not the man to reject possibility. The mummy of Queen Hatshepsu, f'rinstance, has never been found. Or consider gems: the signet of a king might be well worth while, although the gyppies turn out some remarkable fakes. Or the Sphinx Emerald, supposedly dropped into the Nile—"

"What's that?" Stuart asked, leaning forward.

"Quite a remarkable emerald, an ancient Egyptian stone and therefore of pale color, which turns up from time to time. Some remarkable stories connected with it. One of your American magazines has printed them, I understand. This is a stone of extraordinary nature and quite large. The tale goes that it exerts a peculiar effect upon one who gazes into it. Nothing occult or that sort of thing, but psychology—I believe a kind of autohypnosis. The very odd thing about this emerald is that the flaws are abundant, as is usual in beryl, but come together in the center to form the perfect but tiny image of the Great Sphinx —hence the name given it."

"Morrison got that stone," said Stuart quietly.

"Eh—good God!" Sir Evart sat up as though electrified. "Did I hear you aright?"

"I said Morrison got it, yes. It's among the stuff he sent home. I thought it green glass formed about a tiny Sphinx."

"Upon my word! I—why, I can hardly believe it!" Sir Evart stared. "Where is it now?"

"Oh, Miss Morrison has it. I've met her several times and have seen the junk he collected." Stuart pulled at his cigarette. "You say it's an emerald? Has it any particular value?"

"Has it? One of the ancient Egyptian crown jewels! The factitious value is nil, owing to its poor color—but the fictitious value is anything one cares to name." The Englishman was no longer impassive. "I say, Stuart—this must be checked up at once, you know! Real beryl is readily distinguished. Not worth a farthing if it's a replica, but if real the value is colossal! Where on earth did your friend find it?"

"Some Arab fished it out of the Nile. He bought it with other things." A thrill shot through Stuart as he sensed

"Don't get careless or I'll put a bullet into you." Reaching around with his free hand Stuart began to explore his victim's pockets.

the other's excited interest. "Look here: Miss Morrison has an apartment upon Riverside Drive—same one her brother had before the war. I can run up there in a taxi and get it—"

Sir Evart lit a fresh cigarette.

"Easy, now," he said. "Let's look at it calmly, Stuart. The original gem was lost fairly recently, just after the war—lost in the Nile. It can't be the same one your friend got, therefore. It was unset, a cabochon the size of a garden pea—"

"Hold on!" intervened Stuart. "Morrison was in Cairo after the war, too. He was killed a year or two later, not during the fighting, in an accident. And you've just described his emerald perfectly."

"Evidently I misunderstood you. But you'll not get it; I'll go with you and see it where it is." With an effort, Sir Evart regained his calmness. "Let me get my notes first. I've a description of it somewhere. Can't rush at this, you know—a famous stone and all that; must know if it's the real thing. If so, then Bernard Lattimer the collector is the man for it; his collection is world-renowned. Have a drink, compose yourself—back in a moment or so."

Left alone, Stuart scrupled not to pour himself a drink; he needed it.

Penny Morrison, he knew, needed money badly; if this yarn were true, the thing would be a godsend for her.

The Englishman came back into the room, holding a page of typed notes, and insisted on going over them aloud, in a droning voice. The stone was said to be of five carats and a fraction, of poor cut and color, its center showing the image of the Sphinx in profile, formed by flaws. That was to be expected; an unflawed emerald, like a really blue diamond, was almost unknown in the world of gems. The man was making a very real effort at self-control, fighting against credence.

"Remember, Stuart, we're dealing with a famed historical jewel," he stated, "and replicas must have been made, poor imitations; if this is beryl it will answer to simple tests. Until it does, we can't be certain. I don't want you to be misled."

Stuart laughed. "It's all new to me, Sir Evart. Are you lecturing here, by the way?"

"Not at once; my engagements begin out West; Lattimer—the collector whom I mentioned—lives somewhere out there. Well, if you're ready—"

They descended to the street, piled into a cab, and Stuart gave the address of Penny Morrison. It was a fifteen-minute drive from Park Avenue. As they rode, he told Sir Evart about Penny—supporting herself precariously by music, with nothing except what little her brother had left her. They drew up before her apartment-building. Another two minutes saw them in her apartment.

Penny was a head shorter than Stuart; she was gowned in gold-touched maroon; her masses of brownish hair, her vivacious and alive features, her sparkling, alert eyes, were pleasing. Her voice was soft.

WITHOUT mentioning the emerald, Stuart told their errand.

"Sir Evart has agreed to look over the stuff," he concluded, "but he'll be brutally frank about it."

"That's very kind," said Penny. "I'll appreciate it, indeed. I'm well aware that Egyptian tourists usually get stung in their purchases, and I doubt if any of these things have much value. I have everything together—excuse me while I go after them."

She hurried from the room. Sir Evart glanced at the piano, the pictures, the worn rug on the floor, and lighted an Abdallah.

"Gad!" he murmured. "A remarkably nice young woman, Stuart. Teaches music, eh? You know, if that thing proves real, it'll positively be a wrench to sell it to Lattimer. I'd give my right arm to have it myself—but can't afford it, worse luck."

"Have you considered the difficulty of making a replica?"

"Aye; that's a sticker. You see, when the French were in Egypt around 1800 they got hold of the stone; then it vanished, went out of sight. The story says that it turned up briefly just after the war—some chap unearthed it, then dropped it into the Nile. It's known by hearsay, and figures in history and romance no end, but there are no photographs of it. Leonardo da Vinci left a drawing of it, I believe."

Stuart frowned. "Doesn't seem logical—the disappearance, I mean."

"That's Africa for you, my boy. Even people disappear. There was that young Dutch woman, Alexine Thynne—the richest woman in Europe—who vanished in the Sahara in the 1860's, supposedly killed by her own guides. Other things like that, many of them—"

He broke off and rose as Penny returned, bringing a small handbag. This she placed on a dropleaf table, whose burden of music Stuart transferred to the piano.

"Here you are," she said brightly. "Everything's unwrapped."

Sir Evart drew up his chair and opened the bag, to display a miscel-

laneous mass of burial beads, small images, seals and other such trinkets. He began to turn them over with his fingers.

"I thought you said there was an emerald in the lot, Stuart?"

"Oh!" A cry escaped from Penny. "I forgot all about it—that man was here only this morning! He took it to have it *expertised.*"

With a sound like a ripping balloon, Sir Evart drew back from the table.

"So! The thing we most wanted to see, is gone!"

"I'm sorry," blurted the girl, dismay in her face. "He said that if genuine it might be worth all of a hundred dollars."

"A thousand pounds—five thousand dollars, at the least!" the Englishman broke in. "Well, what's done is done. We can't help it if you've sold the stone."

"But I haven't!" she cried tragically. "He gave a receipt for it and promised he'd return in a day or two. He's a well-known person; he's just returned from a buying trip to Egypt."

"His name?"

She stared blankly and bit her lip. "I—I don't remember. Wait! I have his card and the receipt. Let me get them for you."

She hurried out again, and Sir Evart spread his hands.

"You see, Stuart? There's a fate about this thing. The stone knocks about, over half the world, and we come to see it. A man is ahead of us by a few hours—doesn't buy it, just carries it off. Spotted it for what it is, by Jove!"

"It must have been the real thing, then," Stuart said. "But if she didn't sell it to him, then she's not lost it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" snorted the Briton. "We're not dealing with a piece of real estate, man, but with an inestimable jewel, a unique museum piece of enormous value, which can be slid into one's vest pocket—"

Penny returned, breathless, and thrust at them a receipt and a card. The receipt was for one presumed emerald of about five carats, taken on approval. The card, bearing a Madison Avenue address, was printed:

JAMES L. HARTLEY
Jewels de Luxe *Curios*

"Good! A Madison Avenue shop!" cried Stuart. "We can go there right now. How did the man find you, Penny? Why did he come here?"

"He—he said he had met my brother in Egypt," she answered.

Sir Evart broke in: "Very well. Get your things, and we'll go see the chap."

"Ready in a moment," she replied, and hurried off. Sir Evart tapped the card and gave Stuart a beetling look.

"Rather obvious. This chap heard in Egypt about the find, about the sale to an American, obtained the address and ran the thing down—you see? Something fishy about all this. The card is not engraved, but printed; a bad sign. If this fellow Hartley knows the stone for what it is, he's no ordinary dealer."

"Do you know the man?"

"I can't say. I never heard of this name, at all events."

"You suspect something crooked?"

"I don't know. Anything is possible—any sort of fraud, rookery, or downright rascality. I may be wrong, but I'd wager pounds to dollars that your young lady does not see the Sphinx Emerald again in a hurry."

"I'll take the bet," snapped Stuart. "No crook like that is going to—"

"Easy!" The other laid a compelling hand on his wrist. "No jumping at conclusions, please; a very unwise habit. First let us gather evidence, then act upon it, my friend. Remember, Hartley must be an extraordinary person to have recognized the Sphinx Emerald or even to have heard of it. We don't know yet that he did. I am going to make a cast in the dark."

So saying, he produced his notebook, tore out a leaf, wrote down something, and folded it twice. He passed the little square to Stuart, just as Penny returned in hat and coat.

"Hold that, Stuart. Tell me, Miss Morrison: Was your visitor of this morning a very slender gentleman with a particularly large hooked nose and bushy eyebrows?"

"Yes, black brows," she said. "He wore a very large seal bloodstone ring and had fine hands. He spoke with a slight accent, but I can't say just what it was."

Sir Evart laughed.

"Come along, then, let's go to his shop, and after that to my hotel for tea."

They quickly found a taxi, and to ease the tension, Stuart spoke to Penny of her plans.

"You said that you had a chance to sublease the apartment—"

"Yes, I could step out tomorrow and turn it over to friends," she assented. "Not that I want to do so, of course. I've nowhere else to go, so it's only a temptation."

Sir Evart darted her a quick glance.

"Don't be too sure, miss. It may be a very lucky thing. Well, here we are, so out with you! And I suggest that you let me do the talking."

Before them was a shop-window glittering with jewelry and trinkets.

CHAPTER TWO

STUART was prepared for black-browed rascality. Instead, the man who removed his jeweler's glass and greeted them across the counter was frail, blond, quite pleasant until Hartley's name was mentioned; then he fired up with obvious indignation.

"*Ach!* It is that man again! Look you, he has a marvelous knowledge of stones. He argued me into letting him use this address, and now I have trouble all the time. It was a big mistake. You are from the police?"

"No," replied Sir Evart. "We merely want to find Mr. Hartley."

"But there is something wrong, yes? I see it in your eyes! Well, he is gone! He took a plane this noon to fly West and said he would not be back. I have washed my hands of him."

Penny Morrison caught her breath, but Sir Evart only smiled.

"Very well, sir. Let me have his address, and we'll trouble you no more."

"Good. I can do that. For a few days only, he said, he would be at the El Portal Hotel in Santa Fe, New Mexico."

"Thank you; nothing further, then."

OUT in the street, the Englishman spoke brusquely.

"Come along—not far to my hotel. We can talk there."

To Stuart it was quite evident that, so far as Hartley went, the goose was cooked. The man had taken French leave, counting on two or three days' leeway before the police got after him. This in itself was rather conclusive evidence that the emerald was an emerald, but Sir Evart seemed to have something up his sleeve. However, the Englishman said nothing until they reached his hotel and gained his rooms. Then he ordered tea, went to the phone and spoke lengthily with the porter's office, and came back with a cheerful air to settle down at the table between his two guests.

"Now I'll trouble you for that bit of paper, Stuart—thanks." Sir Evart spread it out. "There's our man's proper name—John Monckton. Either of you know him?"

Neither did.

"A man of prewar distinction and brilliance; a rascal of the first water, Dutch or English by birth, concerned in a number of shady transactions abroad—an international crook, and very able."

"Who's jumping at conclusions now?" asked Stuart.

"I'm talking facts, not theories, my dear fellow. Further, Bernard Lattimer lives in or near Santa Fe. The connection is quite obvious. Monckton, alias Hartley, put the emerald in the mail, addressed to himself at El Portal Hotel, then popped aboard a plane; he's quite safe, even if pursued, you see. A smart rascal."

Penny leaned forward. "Then—then you think he stole the emerald?"

"Sure of it. He'd not take such risks without a large prospective gain."

The tea arrived; also a porter with a sheet of paper for Sir Evart, who

took and studied it reflectively. When they were alone again and Penny was pouring the tea, he resumed:

"You have several alternatives, Miss Morrison. It's your affair and I don't want to influence you. You may turn it over to the police, which will involve no end of publicity; you'll punish Hartley, but may not get the stone back."

"Doesn't sound attractive," she commented. "What else?"

"Hm! I must leave tomorrow to lecture in Denver; from there I can be in Santa Fe by flying, on Sunday. I know Lattimer fairly well. The porter informs me he can get one reservation for seven tonight, on a plane reaching Santa Fe early in the morning. Your American connections are rather marvelous, you know. Well, it all depends on what your wishes are. Since you've brought me into the matter—do I stay in?"

"That's up to you," Penny replied, smiling. "I think you should."

"Good. Frankly, I foresee a very active time ahead. Hartley is no fool. I fancy you'll be amazed when you learn how much Lattimer is willing to pay for the emerald."

"You say he's a friend of yours—" began Stuart.

"Friendship doesn't enter into collecting. Lattimer is a retired genius; where his collection is concerned, he doesn't regard the law. If I could steal the crown jewels out of the Tower, he'd buy 'em like a shot."

"Well, see here," broke in Stuart. "Hartley knows Penny here, by sight. You have a lecture date. I can take tonight's plane, reach Santa Fe in the morning, and grab Hartley. He doesn't know me, won't suspect me."

"Basically sound, as a proposal. What about it, Miss Penny?"

She nodded. "It's my game and I ought to play it, but I suppose—"

"Follow on by a later plane," Stuart suggested. He met her eyes and read their hesitation aright. "Sublease the apartment if you like—no, damn it! We've neither of us got the means, Sir Evart, and that's flat. Costs money to travel, you know."

The Englishman nodded, his eyes sparkling.

"Right. I've a few hundred to spare— No, Miss Penny, wait a moment! You agree to let me handle the stone—say, on commission—and I'll advance expenses. This is going to be a brisk game, I warn you; Hartley's a bad enemy to take on. I'll enjoy it no end. Yes? Then we're in alliance. Hold on a sec—I'll make sure of that reservation."

He rose and went to the telephone. Penny looked at Stuart uncertainly.

"I suppose it's the best way, really, but I don't want to trouble you—"

"Nonsense!" He broke into a laugh. "I'm tingling, for the first time in weeks! I wouldn't miss this show for anything. While not broke, I'm pretty well bent, and it's fine to have him come to the rescue; he's a grand chap, Penny. What's more, if I'm out West I can land a drafting job with the Douglas people. Things work out, you see."

SIR EVART returned, rubbing his hands.

"All settled; reservation's in your name, Stuart. The pursuit of the Sphinx Emerald is under way! Miss Penny, you can come West with me tomorrow. At Kansas City you change to another plane that will drop you at Santa Fe while I go on to Denver. You'll join Stuart a day ahead of me, then. I'll assume your expenses and can stand Stuart a hundred dollars for expenses—his reservation is charged to me. Right?"

Stuart nodded. "I'll go as I stand; a phone call will take care of my clothes and effects."

"Then we'll toast our luck." Sir Evart lifted his cup, beaming over it. "If I were Hartley, I'd have dropped that stone in the air mail, so it should be delivered to him sometime tomorrow; mind that!"

"Which should make him liable for a Federal offense," assented Stuart.

"Careful, now, my lad! Miss Penny doesn't fancy police business. We're not out to punish anyone—we're after that emerald, and I'm trusting to your level head. A bit of beryl not as large as your little fingernail, remember."

"I get you, sir. Penny gets there sometime Saturday, you sometime Sunday. Do you want me to contact Lattimer?"

"Contact? Oh! Get in touch with him, eh? No, better not unless things go amiss. I can't tell you what to expect. You have a head—use it. Here's your hundred."

Stuart pocketed the roll of money handed him. The bus for his plane would leave downtown at six; he had time to spare.

The three sat talking. To Stuart, who knew Penny fairly well, the radiance behind her poise was a marvelous thing, like sunlight behind a chinked wall. He liked the expert way Sir Evart Buckson brought her out. He liked everything about her; he had, ever since meeting her, thought her a rare and precious thing. She was no tricky finagling female, but frank, level-eyed, genuine.

To Buckson he gave similar credit. Close to forty, Stuart reckoned, but with a youthful spring to his step, a reflective, calm eye, a lift of the spirit; one to depend upon in a pinch, for advice and for action. Practical, yes, yet not material. That reflective gaze was touched with spirituality. The man had not been knighted for making money, but for some things he had written about the Egyptian religions—Stuart could not remember exactly what. There were depths to him.

His phone call made, the safety of his few belongings assured, Stuart stepped into the bathroom and washed. He caught sight of himself in the glass. Unevenly browned by work in the sun, not by a sun lamp, his knobby features were pleasantly relieved by a hint of laughter about his steady eyes.

"No beauty prizes for you," he muttered with a sniff, "but you do get things done, old ugly-mug!"

He rejoined the others and took another cup of tea. It was a pleasant changed from the universal coffee.

"Drink it fast," said Penny, glancing at her watch. "I'll walk to the terminus with you. Those buses go on the dot, remember." She turned to their host. "You've turned me topsy-turvy this afternoon. I can be ready to leave with you tomorrow, by fast work, but tell me one thing: is it worth it? You mentioned a thousand pounds—"

Sir Evart took her hand. "My dear, the world I knew is all changed; institutions and men are different, values are different, nothing is the same. Yet I honestly believe that sum is the veriest minimum. You may get more."

"Thanks to you. Now, let's have all this on a business footing, please. You must have a share of all benefits—"

He laughed. "A commission, then?"

"Right. Twenty per cent is the usual art commission. Sufficient?"

"Far too much."

"Not a bit of it; so that's settled." She flung a glance at Stuart. "Ready, tea-guzzler?"

With thanks and cheery farewells to Sir Evart, they gained the street and turned toward Forty-second. Penny was brisk, cheerful, decisive.

"I like your English friend. He has an air—I think he's a magician who enchants everything around him!"

"That's the advantage of having money." Stuart spoke a trifle bitterly. "I don't like being on him for expenses. I don't like being broke. I want a stake."

Her laugh rang clear. "Bosh! So do I, but I'm not fretting over it. Don't get sour. Don't get to thinking the world's down on you!"

"I have my reasons, as you very well know," he cut in. "And to think I'm on my way West—a most amazing, incredible thing!"

"Precisely." She took his arm. "It's all out of this world. This morning I woke up sane; tonight I'll be a lunatic. And going West tomorrow—me, Penny Morrison! Oh, I just thought of something that Chuck wrote me before he died. Said he had sent an emerald, and added: *'Be careful not to look at it too long.'* What could he have meant?"

"I don't know—or yes, I do, too!" Stuart remembered what Sir Evart had said about the peculiar hypnotic effect exerted by the Sphinx Emerald, and quoted it. "Must have some refference to that quality of fancied influence. Mystics surround famous gems with all sorts of bosh, you know. Don't take any stock in it."

She laughed. "I didn't even know that was the emerald he meant; I thought it a bit of glass, really! We can be terrible fools, can't we?"

"Darling fools." Stuart had his own ideas about Penny Morrison and did not hesitate to voice them. "Wholly adorable, my dear. But if you'll accept my advice, we should have the cops step in, pinch this guy Hartley and hold him till you arrive. The emerald would be seized when delivered at the hotel there. That's the sensible thing to do."

She pressed his arm. "Stop and think, Stuart! The newspapers would be filled with the wildest sort of stories, and then questions would be asked. How did the emerald get into this country? Was it loot? Well, I don't know. Chuck got it in, and he's dead, and I don't intend to have his name dragged in the mud for a dozen emeralds. Do what our friend said—use your head!"

"Okay. Tomorrow's Friday, you'll arrive on Saturday, and I'll have the blasted thing to put in your hand when you get there! So be sure to look in your box when you reach the hotel; I'll reserve a room for you."

Their parting was lighthearted, even gay. Stuart barely had time to buy a safety razor and a tube of shaving-cream; then he was in a different world, passing through the terminus to the bus, the roaring city locked out.

On his way to Santa Fe—and what?

The future worried him little; how to get the emerald scarcely gave him a second thought. Hartley was a crook who had bamboozled Penny, that was all. Stuart vaguely reflected that he might have to knock the fellow down and take it away from him, and then dismissed the matter. He was far more concerned with the job he hoped to get in the far West; and before he leaned back in his seat that night and went to sleep, he had written the letter applying for it.

All in all, a good day's work well done, he told himself.

Chapter Three

WITH something of this same feeling, he rolled into Santa Fe in early daylight. The air was cold, high, crystal-clear; woodsmoke curled above the city; the tips of the Sangre de Cristo mountains were radiant with sunrise beams. He had a glimpse of the Plaza, of the ancient Palace of the Governors; then the bus spewed him forth in El Portal's courtyard, in modern luxury and pseudo-Spanish surroundings.

Coming close, Stuart saw that this door stood open an inch or two. Curious, he walked over and knocked.

A room, reserved from New York, was waiting. He tubbed, shaved, went down to an early breakfast and was ready for the street hours before the shops opened; he wanted a shirt, clean linen, a few odds and ends. His suit was his best, and good enough. Having mailed his letter about the job, he went to the desk and reserved a room for Penny, arriving on the morrow, and one for Sir Evart, due on Sunday.

"By the way, I have a friend who should have reached here yesterday or last night," he said to the clerk. "The name is Hartley. What's his room number?"

The clerk disappeared and came back with a shake of the head.

"No such person here at all, Mr. Stuart."

The dismayed Stuart insisted; so did the clerk, who thereupon phoned two other local hotels. No such person anywhere.

Stuffing his pipe, Stuart abandoned argument, strolled out into the morning sunlight, and made his way to the Plaza. He found an empty bench and sat down, eying the shops around the square and puffing at his pipe as he thought. Hartley had left this address in New York, but this meant little. Perhaps he did not want to be reached at all from New York. He might be using his real name of Monckton, or any other.

"Hm! First blood to the enemy," thought Stuart. "The game's not so easy. After all, it was only a guess that he had sent the stone by mail, but probably he did so. Then I'd better try the name of Monckton."

The shops were opening, now, as time passed. He stepped into a drugstore, called the hotel, and asked to speak with Mr. Monckton. No such

guest was there. Stuart hung up, made the round of the shops, bought the clean linen he needed, and thoughtfully footed it back to the hotel. He bought a morning newspaper and settled down in a lobby chair, though reading was a pretense.

This was a knockout. For a little he was frightened. Hartley might not have come here at all; the proximity of Bernard Lattimer to this spot might have completely deluded Sir Evart. However, Stuart bluntly refused to accept this possibility.

Perhaps Sir Evart had gone off the deep end. Better to throw overboard all his notions and look at facts. According to the shop jeweler, he had gone to Santa Fe—no name mentioned; and had taken a plane West. He might have stopped at a dozen places before ending at Santa Fe. He had left Penny Morrison, the emerald in his pocket, and had then wound up his affairs in New York and caught a noon plane. That was quick work.

"Registering a package by mail takes time," thought Stuart. "Why—hell's bells! He never sent the gem by mail; he lacked the time! We got off on the wrong foot. He may not be here for a week. He's far too smart to pull the obvious trick of a crook; and in fact we don't even know as yet that he is a crook."

IT was all very sobering; and, before Stuart had finished glancing over his newspaper, something else occurred to put a complete damper on all exuberance. A page summoned him; at the desk he was handed a telegram. He tore it open, then went back to his chair and reread it with stupefaction. It had come from New York, and read:

> WIRE FROM HARTLEY CHICAGO STATES ALLEGED EMERALD BEING RETURNED AIRMAIL WITH APOLOGIES. ADVISE. —PENNY

Stuart filled his pipe and lighted it. So Hartley was in Chicago! Abruptly, he caught at one word: alleged. The *alleged emerald*, Hartley called it! That was a bit of a giveaway. Had he not had Hartley described to him as a super-smart rascal, Stuart might have swallowed this; but obviously Hartley had, in using this word, implied that the stone now being returned was not genuine.

"It doesn't click, somehow," Stuart told himself, frowning at the message. "The guy is in Chicago, and therefore we're all off base. Hm! Penny wants me to advise her. I'll have to be sharp about it, time being two hours later in New York than here. No time to stop and think—"

He looked up. The desk clerk, trying to catch his eye, was beckoning. He rose and went back to the desk.

"Mr. Stuart! Weren't you asking last night about a friend named Hartley? We've just had a wire from him; he's at Chicago, and arrives here at midnight. Thought you'd like to know."

"I'll take this real gem and be responsible for it."

"Yes, indeed! Thanks a lot. Give me a telegraph blank, will you?"

Things were clearing, Stuart mused, as he addressed the wire to Penny. Mr. Hartley, all unwitting, had put a big spoke in his own wheel, in reserving hotel space. He had flown to Chicago—why? Never mind that. He was heading for Santa Fe right enough, and using his own name. Stuart made the telegram emphatic:

> CHANGE NO PLANS COME ALONG ARRANGING FOR PACKAGE TO FOLLOW. —STUART.

"Get this off immediately, please no delays. Thanks." He handed over the message, said he would later leave a note for his friend Hartley, took his packages to his own room, and after changing, went out for a walk. He did not regret his impulsive action.

"Now let's get off to a new start," he told himself, as he walked along the Plaza and the narrow streets beyond. "Hartley is a bad egg—smooth, crafty, but not brainy at all. He hears in Egypt about the finding of a certain stone or bit of glass with a tiny Sphinx inside. He traces it to New York and loses no time seeing it and grabbing it. Then what? He doesn't look for any pursuit by a woman. The chief possible purchaser lives near here, so he starts for here but makes a stop-off at Chicago. Why? For something important. I might guess why, but that's bad luck, so I won't. Meantime, I'm here. Am I going to sit around wasting my opportunity or am I going to use my head and keep my eye on the ball? Damned if I know!"

Too bad the police were ruled out; to grab Hartley and the emerald on arrival would be the sensible thing. Still, Penny had her reasons. So what? It was maddening to think of the man arriving with the jewel in his waistcoat pocket and nothing happening; something *must* happen!

Hartley, from Chicago, had wired Penny that the gem was being returned, in order to gain time and freedom from any pursuit. He must be tapped on arrival, then; he must be looted before his suspicions were aroused, and there was only one way to do it—the simplest, most direct way.

His mind made up, Stuart went back to the hotel. He left a call for eight that evening, then pulled down his blinds and got into bed. Before he knew it, he was asleep, and did not waken until his telephone summoned him.

Eight o'clock—and he felt ravenous. He bathed, dressed, got downstairs before the dining-room closed, and ordered a substantial dinner, to which he did full justice. Afterward, he went out and found a movie, which entertained him until eleven. Then back to the hotel, where he discreetly braced the night clerk about the arrival of an expected friend. The hotel bus would be in from the airport, he learned, a few minutes past midnight. Stuart settled down in a chair, his evening beginning where that of others was ending. He was alert, fresh, nimble-witted. Knowing what had to be done, he was entirely ready to do it, with no wasted effort.

The lobby emptied. Time dragged; Stuart walked about, studied the Indian sand-paintings here and there about the lobby floor, eyed the window displays of the lobby shops. His pipe was in his coat pocket. The minutes passed; twelve o'clock came and went. He lit a cigarette and took a chair near the stairs. The hotel had no elevator, being of only two rambling stories, in Spanish style.

There was a stir at the entrance; the doors swung, a bus-driver entered, carrying a bag, a man with him. Both went to the desk. Presently a bellman came toward the stairs, bag in hand, the new arrival behind him: a smallish man; under his hatbrim was a striking set of features, hooked nose, bushy black brows. "Hartley," sure enough! Stuart rose, stubbed out his cigarette, and followed them up the stairs, unhurried.

THE upper corridor was obscured. A door opened, lights inside were switched on. Stuart came past, noted the number of the door, went on down the corridor to the turn, waited a little, headed back. The room door was closed. He halted, pulled his hat over his eyes, and knocked.

The door was opened.

"Telegram, Mr. Hartley," Stuart said—and pushed the door with his foot so that it flew open. He stepped inside, right hand in his coat pocket gripping his pipe in ominous outline, and closed the door behind him.

Hartley stared at him.

"You can't get away with it," said Stuart. "That stop in Chicago didn't fool anybody. Turn around, face to the wall. Get your hands up—fast!"

HIS words were enough to break down Hartley, who gasped and obeyed the order. Stuart came close behind him.

"Don't get careless or I'll put a bullet into you." Reaching around with his free hand, Stuart began to explore his victim's pockets, speaking the while to keep Hartley from pulling himself together. "So you mailed the imitation emerald back from Chicago, eh? Very clever bit of work. I suppose you got a bit of glass made up and sent back."

"I'll see you jailed for this!" Hartley spoke thickly, furiously.

Stuart met the threat with a laugh.

"Not likely. Hold still, now! You wouldn't like the cops to be asking you any questions, would you? Now I think we have everything—but I don't want your personal effects, so hold still while I weed 'em out. Don't move."

A small box in the waistcoat pocket—that should be it, but he could not take chances. With his one hand, he opened it, saw a pale green shimmer bedded in cotton, and pocketed it. The wallet and other items he had removed, he tossed to the nearby bed.

Then a sharp rap at the door startled him.

"Easy! Stay as you are."

With the command, he stepped back and opened the door. A stranger stood there, a man whose floppy brown hat, sprigged with a small feather, was drawn down over his eyes.

"Mr. Hartley here?" he asked.

Stuart opened the door wide.

"Sure thing. Walk in."

The other entered; as he did so, Stuart squeezed past, pulled shut the door and went down the hall fast. He ran, and no one followed. There was no outcry. His room was in the other wing of the hotel. He gained it without incident, shut the door upon himself; he was alone—and triumphant!

His writing-table had a desk light. He switched it on, and before it put the little cardboard box in which reposed the emerald. He sat down and examined this; it was the same stone he had noted among Chuck Morrison's effects—pale green in hue, an uneven cabochon in shape, with something dark in the center. At this he gazed with some interest. On holding the stone close to the light, he fancied it had the shape of the Sphinx.

"The stone's a deeper green underneath it. Hm! Should have a glass to enlarge it." He laid down the emerald, lit a cigarette, and with a smile looked at his plunder. The little box was unmarked. "Apparently I hit the nail on the head, too: the guy arranged to have a near-replica made in Chicago and sent to Penny."

Abruptly he remembered something that sobered him. That caller at Hartley's room—who had it been? Some friend who expected his arrival? Oh, the hell with it! Another crook or two mattered nothing.

"If there's any need, I can confess openly: this was stolen property and I was recovering it," he thought. He picked up the tiny box; it seemed a bit heavy. He took out the packed cotton, and beneath it found an unrimmed enlarging-glass—evidently to assist in examining the stone.

Picking it up, he held the emerald beneath it. The Sphinx-figure leaped out; he almost gasped at sight of it, thus, perfect in form. Under the glass, too, the whole body of the gem took on new form and coloring: The minute crystalline striations, the flaws, the tiny angular bubbles—who ever heard of angular bubbles? Yet there they were!—gave him a sensation of surprise, even of delight. Instead of a dot of beryl, here he had a vista of green beneath the light, thanks to the enlarging-glass. He gazed into it for a long time, and experienced a queer upheaval of emotions. He imagined things passing before his very eyes. Astonished, he removed the glass and looked at the stone. No, nothing except a spot of greenish beryl.

Under the glass again, this expanded. Stuart wondered how the emerald could be distinguished from glass; he was ignorant of the fact that this green color, persisting true under artificial light, was one evidence. Singular fancies crept through, or came from, those green vistas. Really a double cabochon in form, this crystal had depth; the light glinted across those verdant expanses, refraction tempted the imagination, and the least change of position instantly gave birth to fresh illusions.

At the start, the sensation was not unpleasant: an uplift, a sense of power, an ecstasy such as rare old wine might engender in the spirit. But it changed. Uneasiness stole upon him, a vaguely troubling worry tormented him. He sought the cause, and there was none, visibly. Yet it remained and grew more intense. Something seemed very wrong. The sensation sharpened imperceptibly until it was acute. An odd idea took shape in his mind, as though whispers were coming to him from the emerald.

He had the stone; nor did he feel that in getting it he had acted wrongly. Yet he had taken the law into his own hands, beyond all question. His uneasiness became a definite feeling of blame, of self-accusation. This was disturbing; so was the notion of reparation, as though he had done something for which he must pay. All folly, of course. But, remembering what had been said about self-hypnosis, and Chuck Morrison's warning to Penny, Stuart abruptly tore himself from the glass and gave up his gazing. He glanced at his watch and felt a start of alarm. He had been busied with this emerald, not for a few minutes, but for two solid hours!

He dropped the stone in its bed of cotton, put down the glass, and placed them on the table. His uneasiness and troubled worry were gone at once. He locked his door, laughing at his own ridiculous notions. Thought of Hartley caused him no foreboding. Of course Hartley could discover who had been hanging about the lobby so late, and might well guess at the identity of the robber. He might even attempt some return blow—but that was nonsense. The man was in no position to strike back. Sir Evart's talk of his cleverness was bosh.

Unworried now, blissfully satisfied, Stuart disrobed, switched off his light, and stretched out in bed, feeling unaccountably tired. He fell asleep almost at once, and so profound was his slumber that nothing disturbed him until the bedside telephone rang and rang again.

This was at noon the next day.

CHAPTER FOUR

SLEEPILY, his head heavy and feellike a solid marble mass, Stuart got hold of the phone. He managed to make out that the desk clerk was calling him.

"I think you reserved space for today, Mr. Stuart, for a Miss Morrison?"

"Eh? Oh, for Penny—sure thing!"

"We thought you might like to know that we just had a wire from her saying she would arrive by air at three-thirty this afternoon."

"Oh, fine! Thanks a lot."

Stuart hung up, yawned, and then glanced at his watch with incredulous horror. Noon! Impossible!

He jumped out of bed and staggered. Then he noticed an odd sort of odor in the room, sweet and sickish. He became aware of his stuffed-up head, his sluggish senses, and suddenly wanted fresh air. He had forgotten to open his window. Making his way to it, he shoved it wide open and drank in the fresh sunny air with quick relief. Almost at once his head began to clear.

Bewildered, he pulled a chair to the window and sat down. Something had happened, but he could not figure out what it was. Last thing he remem-

bered was sitting and gazing at the emerald. He remembered the warning sent to Penny by her brother: *"Be careful not to look at it too long."* Auto-hypnosis? No, that would not cause such queer effects. Might have something to do with it, of course; but there had definitely been something in the room—

His vagrant gaze touched upon the writing-table. He blinked at it; he rubbed his eyes, got up and stared. His senses cleared. The table was empty; the little box and the glass were gone.

Now he understood. He got under the shower, his brain steadied, he came back and dressed, in a savage mood. By some odd kink, what stuck in his mind was a floppy brown hat sprigged with a red feather—a friend who had arrived to meet Hartley. A man who is not alone can manage anything.

Leaving the room, he lit a cigarette and started downstairs, suppressing a groan and an oath. Not clever, eh? He had been a fool to laugh at them. They had worked fast and efficiently, injecting through the keyhole into the room some soporific and then unlocking the door and walking in to get the emerald. By not opening his window, he had played into their hands; no doubt they had shot enough dope into the room to pretty near kill him.

At the desk, his inquiries sadly confirmed all this. Yes, Mr. Hartley had checked out early, before five o'clock, in fact—had paid for his room and gone to visit friends. He had left no forwarding address. With this to sauce his meal, Stuart sought the dining-room and secured lunch. Nice news with which to greet Penny at three-thirty! Now he was back where he had started—except that he was a trifle wiser.

What now—the police? Definitely not. Lattimer? He had been quietly warned off by Sir Evart. Yet he felt an urgent pull toward action. Hartley had arrived at midnight and could have had no sleep since; until evening, at least, the man would be resting. This, as Stuart could see, was his only chance to get anything accomplished, to repair his own folly.

He made his way back to the desk, and there got hold of the clerk with whom he had just spoken.

"Perhaps you can help me. I missed my friend Hartley last night. He skipped out this morning before I was up—checked out about five, you said. It just occurred to me that he might have taken a taxi. If he did, and you can locate the driver, I might find my friend after all."

A bright idea, said the clerk; it might work. He summoned a bellman, telephoned, learned that a taxi had been called that morning, and set about locating it. This was not hard; calls at that hour in Santa Fe were not common. Within ten minutes a little man in a driver's cap sought him out.

"I took two men and a bag from here at five this morning," he said. "I hear you want to locate them?"

"That's right, if they're still in town," assented Stuart.

"I reckon so. I took 'em to a place on the north side."

"Got your car here? Let's go," Stuart said impulsively.

"Ain't much of a place—just a big trailer where a guy lives."

Two minutes later they were bumping toward a newly built-up section where buildings thinned and ran into brownish stretches of open country at the very edge of the city. The roads became unpaved trails. Bleak hills ran over the horizon.

"That's it," said the driver, and pointed to a reddish-brown trailer, without a car, standing in a field to the right, isolated and alone. "I'll have to stop here; can't trust my tires in that stubble."

"I'll walk over." Stuart thrust a bill at him. "Wait for me."

He left the car and started across the field toward the trailer, which was closed and apparently empty. Wooden steps mounted to the door at one end. Coming close, Stuart saw that this door stood open an inch or two. Curious, he walked over to it, ascended the wooden steps, and knocked. No answer; nothing was heard. He gave the door a push—and as it opened upon horror, his heart skipped a beat.

Directly before him, on the floor of the trailer, sat a man leaning against the far wall, holding a revolver cocked in his lap. Staring-eyed, the man had bled to death, as a blackened pool of blood on the floor indicated all too surely, from a wound apparently in his thigh or back. Beside him was a floppy-brimmed brown hat adorned with a sliver of feather; this was the man who had come to Hartley's room in the hotel.

STUART took it in at a glance; the wide fixed eyes, the ghastly pallor, told of death. He caught his breath; then something white caught his eye. Beside the body, as though fallen from the lax, free hand, was the little box that had contained the Sphinx Emerald. It still contained it. In the fall, the lid had become dislodged and Stuart could see a flash of green.

The truth flashed across his brain. Hartley and this unknown had together obtained the stone from his room and had come here; then had got into a fight over the loot. This man had seized it, had been wounded, and had sunk down here. Hartley, ignorant of approaching death, had skipped out hurriedly without the emerald—and here it was!

Stuart did not stop to think. Police, investigations, folly—nothing occurred to him. He took one step forward, reached down, and picked up the stone from the little box. He touched the man, whose body was stiff and cold, then hastily drew back. He drew the door shut and descended the steps, and strode toward the waiting taxi.

"Nobody home?" queried the driver as he came up.

"Door's unlocked, but nobody answered me," said Stuart, and climbed in. "Back to the hotel, I guess. Anyhow, I'll know where to come next time."

He sat back on the cushions and shivered. The stone was in his pocket; but realization of his own stupidity was appalling. True, no one seemed near; the bright sunlight revealed no threat in any direction; yet investigation must come, and when it came this taxi-driver would recall his name and he would be thrust into it.

Well, that could be met and faced; Stuart, with an effort, forced down his heart-hammerings. Hartley would return sooner or later, but certainly would not report the matter to the police. That would result only from curiosity of neighbors. There was no immediate menace.

Still, when he got out at the hotel he was in a sweat. He gave the driver a fat tip, and the man chuckled.

"Thanks, Mister. That brings it up to just the right figure for El Paso."

"Eh?" Stuart frowned. "What d'you mean by that?"

"I been saving up tips and so forth. I got a brother down to El Paso and I want to visit him for a month, and this is my last job for a while. Now I can get off tomorrow. I was raised down there and it'll be good to see old friends."

"Driving down?"

"When we got roads like glass, I sure ain't wasting coin on railroad fare! Well, thanks a lot."

He drove away, and Stuart turned into the hotel. A feeling of vast relief surged through him. There went his only immediate chance of being drawn into the murder mystery—for such it would be called, no doubt.

"Strictly speaking, my duty is probably to report the matter," Stuart told himself. "If the man were alive, I'd have to do it. But he's dead. I can do him no good by putting the cops on Hartley, and might do myself and Penny a lot of harm. So I'll just stand pat."

He looked at his watch—three o'clock! Procuring an envelope at the desk, he addressed it to Penny, slipped the emerald inside, sealed it, and gave it to the desk clerk to put in her box. She would find it there on arrival, as he had promised her. Somewhat tickled by this conceit, he went out to the street, stopped at the first jewelry-shop, and bought an enlarg-

ing-glass. With this in his pocket he came back to the hotel and sought his room. As he sat, lost in thought, Stuart was aware of an avid desire to have that emerald here and to gaze again into its depths. He shrugged off the desire almost angrily, and not without a trace of fear. The thing was almost uncanny—what strange sensations he had experienced from it last night!

Yet in his heart he knew it was not uncanny at all; he had simply been stirred into recognition of his own fears. In general, the close view of the stone had inspired a fine brave sensation which he craved to repeat; not hypnotic, but an awakening of his own innate consciousness. Stuart had too much common sense to credit any occult influences.

HE was wakened from his abstraction by the telephone, and picked it up to hear Penny's voice.

"Hello, stranger! I'm here. And no one to meet me—not even a guy standing at the hotel door! You're a grand greeter, I don't think!"

"Hi, Penny. It's grand to hear your voice," he replied. "I left a green orchid in your box as promised."

"I got it, Bill. And I'm thrilled, honest: your crimes are forgiven."

"Thanks. Have a good trip? When do I see you?"

"Swell trip, old boy. You don't see me for the next half-hour, I hope. After that, name your time."

"Thirty-one minutes, then. Meet you in the lobby. And, Penny— Don't leave that green thing lying around in your room. Tuck it away somewhere."

"Okay, Bill."

He hung up; the world had changed. Her voice had altered everything, and even bitter memories lessened. He was back to reality now, and before he realized, he was whistling cheerfully.

Penny was prompt to the minute. Her alive, sparkling personality was like charged wine to him; yet the eagerness in all she said and did was pleasantly restrained by an alert, hard realism; she could dream, yet kept her dreams within limits.

"I want to see everything—just walk and talk and look around!" she exclaimed. "I've never been here before, and it's interesting. You can tell me how you got the stone back, as we go."

"No." Stuart ushered her out to the street. "Let it wait. Sir Evart will be here tomorrow; then's time enough to talk about it. After dinner tonight I'll introduce you to the emerald; but now we'll just have a look at Santa Fe before the sun goes down."

Churches, *acequias,* buildings— Stuart himself had not realized what there was here to see, and "doing" the town in company with Penny made time fly. At twilight they returned

"I just had to make you say it, Bill: 'I love you!' "

to the hotel, celebrated the occasion with a cocktail, and a little later met in the dining-room for dinner.

"I'm really curious, Bill," Penny said across the table with a smile, "about how you got hold of the emerald. Do you expect me to wait until Sir Evart gets here?"

He nodded soberly as he met her dancing eyes.

"Yeah, guess you'll have to. No particular reason for secrecy—it's just that things happened pretty fast and I'm not at all sure of my ground. This business may be more risky than it appears, too."

"Okay, I'll be good. Is our friend Hartley here?"

"Not here, I trust, but he's somewhere around. I figure that he went to someone he knew in Chicago and ordered a reasonable imitation of the emerald sent you, trusting you'd accept it as the original."

"And I would have, of course, except for you and Sir Evart. I've left instructions for any airmail to be forwarded here. Tomorrow's Sunday—well, it might come any time; depends on how long it would take to make the replica and get it to me. Sir Evart will get in tomorrow, too."

Stuart again nodded thoughtfully. Before he could reply, a page appeared and gave him a card with a word.

"A gentleman gave me this for you, sir. He's waiting for a reply."

Astonished, Stuart glanced at the writing on the card, then was astonished anew. It read:

Can you give me a few moments when you finish dinner, please?
John Monckton.

Stuart blinked. He looked at the page.

"Where's this man—in the lobby?"

"Yes, sir."

"Okay. Tell him yes; I'll see him there."

THE page departed. Stuart met Penny's gaze.

"You don't seem exactly enthusiastic over your visitor, Bill."

"I'm not," he replied. "It's Hartley, using his real name of Monckton. Wants to see me. Maybe he saw you dining here with me. He could easily learn my name from the hotel desk, of course. If he saw you, he'll probably be prepared for trouble."

She looked around. "Impossible. The lobby's not in view from here."

Seeing this to be the case, Stuart breathed more freely. He was in fear lest she be pulled into the affair, and said so frankly. She laughed.

"Nonsense! That man evidently takes me for a fool, and I'd like to express my opinion of him to his face. However, I'll not interfere."

"Then suppose you let me leave first. I'll draw him off into a corner so he won't notice you when you come out. Right now he probably has his eye on the dining-room entrance. You go to your room, and after a few minutes I'll come there."

She nodded assent. Dessert and coffee arrived. Stuart made no haste; he was thankful that Penny fired no questions at him. This was an amazing action on the part of Hartley and rather knocked him off balance. He wished fervently that Sir Evart were here, then could have kicked himself for the wish.

"What the hell! I'm not an idiot," he reflected. "I can handle the guy as well as anyone else could, so I'd better do it."

He called for the check, signed it, and rose, conscious of Penny's gaze.

"Well, see you later," he said, and departed.

Chapter Five

THE visitor was not far to seek. Stuart caught sight of him standing at the desk and talking with the clerk, and went straight up to him. Hartley saw his approach and nodded.

"Suppose we sit down and be comfortable," said Stuart, and headed for a far corner that was unoccupied. Hartley laughed slightly.

"I wasn't sure you'd know the name of Monckton, Mr. Stuart."

"Oh, I'm slightly conversant with affairs," Stuart said lightly, and switched around an armchair. He placed an ash-holder within reach, produced and lit a cigarette, and seated himself. Without doing so obviously, he now had Hartley seated with his back to the dining-room entrance.

"Well," he said, "what's the nature of your business with me?"

Hartley, in animation, was quite pleasant and perfectly calm.

"I don't think we need do any fencing, Mr. Stuart. When you stopped in at the trailer today, I was in a nearby house and saw you. I returned later to the trailer and the emerald was gone. I don't need to refer to the events of last night."

Stuart met his gaze, and smiled.

"Nor this morning. I don't think you'd better, indeed! You certainly had your nerve to go back there after I had stopped in."

Hartley shrugged. "Never mind. You came there, found what was inside, and by that fact placed yourself in what might prove a very unpleasant position."

"Nuts!" said Stuart. "You'd be in a lot worse position if I talked up."

"That might be argued. However, I'm not here in order to indulge threats. It occurs to me that you must be a practical person, and I wish to speak with you as such, without evasions or false pretenses."

"Good!" agreed Stuart cheerfully. "Threat and counter-threat really wouldn't get us anywhere—so go right ahead."

He spoke lightly; but he was conscious of danger. This man was putting a pleasant face on things, that was all. With each word uttered, Stuart was more impressed with actual peril, with craft, with weighty potentiality on Hartley's part. Behind the affable mask lurked hard, cold steel; he could feel it actively. This fellow was no lightweight; he had a lot on the ball.

"Just who you are, I don't know." Hartley spoke without haste, lighting a cigar with care and attention. "From your words to me last evening, you obviously know all about the Sphinx Emerald. How you got on to me, I don't know either, or care; that's all beside the point. The main thing is that you're here, and at this moment you have the emerald."

"You may be mistaken about that," Stuart said quietly. "I might be a detective."

The other snorted gently.

"You'd not be talking about it. I'm not a fool! You're a friend of Miss Morrison, granted. That's enough. I've made mistakes; now I want to approach you fairly and squarely and without animosity, with a view to settlement."

Stuart was faintly amused.

"Go ahead, if you have an objective."

"Very definitely. . . . As a precious stone, that emerald is practically worthless. As a historical piece and a unique stone, it is priceless. I know why you're here, of course; about here live people who buy such things. That's why I'm here, naturally. In the hills about Santa Fe are millionaires, retired business men, collectors of all sorts."

As he talked, Hartley smiled thinly. "Where wealth is, the vultures gather. I can handle the stone to much better effect than can you. I'm not alone in this affair; I have friends on the way here now. I risk little in talking with you thus. Understood? Very well. I offer you half the proceeds to throw in with me and hand over the emerald. I have five hundred dollars in my pocket this minute to give you, as an advance. Yes or no, Mr. Stuart?"

No longer amused, Stuart's reaction was thoughtful. A movie hero, he reflected, would betray indignant rage at this offer of bribery, but he was not insulted; he was no hero.

"Have you an alternative?" he asked.

"Certainly; I leave that to your imagination. I'm not coming up in my offers, you know. This is your one and only chance to come in with me."

"Refused."

"Very good; that's all, then."

Hartley rose, nodded, walked away.

WITH mingled emotions, Stuart watched him go out of the hotel. Hartley was willing to pay five hundred to get the emerald. Then why had he not bought it in the first place? Uncertainty, of course.

"I won't get that much, even if Sir Evart does sell it," Stuart told himself. "In fact, the thing belongs to Penny—I don't want any money out of it. And now what? Of course he'll try some other scheme. I'd better warn Penny immediately and get that emerald into safety."

He went to the house telephone, called Miss Morrison's room, and thrilled to Penny's response.

"Hello, Bill! Everything all right?"

"Oh, sure!"

"Good; I was anxious about it. Is our friend still there?"

"Yes; he just left. Will you come down and meet me in the writing-room? The hotel might deem it highly improper if I came to you."

"At once, my good cautious Sir Tristram, at once!"

"And bring that green thing with you."

"Naturally; it is now my second self."

Stuart turned from the phones. He became aware of a bellboy and a man heading for him; his nerves jumped as the bellboy made an unmistakable gesture toward him. The man was a stranger—tall, of distinguished appearance, with white hair and mustache, but remarkably hale and hearty.

"Mr. Stuart?" the stranger spoke up. "My name is Lattimer. I have a wire here from Sir Evart Buckson, who arrives tomorrow, so strangely interesting that I've come to look you up. I understand that you have the Sphinx Emerald."

Mentally, Stuart drew sharply back.

"If I had, I wouldn't discuss it with you," he said. "I don't know that you're Mr. Lattimer; to me you're a stranger. You'll have to excuse me until Sir Evart is here to speak for himself."

Made aware of his ungraciousness by the other's expression, he offered a swift half-apology.

"Sorry; I don't mean to antagonize you—I've been deviled right and left. Five minutes ago a prize crook was here, bold as brass, on the same trail."

Lattimer started slightly.

"Indeed! You're quite right, Mr. Stuart. I don't blame you in the least,

and I applaud your caution. I sha'n't urge you a whit. Kindly give my card to Sir Evart when he arrives, and ask him to call me immediately. It's important."

Stuart took the pasteboard handed him, and instantly repented his own lack of courtesy. He had no chance to speak further; Lattimer bowed slightly and turned away, walking swiftly to the entrance. Stuart glanced at the card: *Bernard Lattimer,* with a phone number. He turned toward the writing-room, frowning, angry at himself yet not regretting his action.

"Maybe I'm a fool, maybe not, but no harm done anyhow," he reflected.

Five minutes later, seated at a writing-room desk with Penny beside him, he told her of the two visitors.

"I don't get it—any of it," he said irritably. "I'd like to crawl in a hole and pull it in after me, until Sir Evart shows up."

"But why?" she demanded, wide-eyed.

"Too much of a squeeze—getting into murder is too much for me," he replied and confusedly broke off. "Well, let it pass. Here's an enlarging-glass. Remember what Chuck wrote you about gazing into that emerald? It says things to you. Get the stone under this writing-light and look into it."

She looked at him. "Bill Stuart, you're not washing me up like that! Murder? Well, I'll stick to my bargain and ask no questions till Sir Evart gets here; but you are certainly going to do some talking tomorrow, let me warn you, and don't try to renege then!"

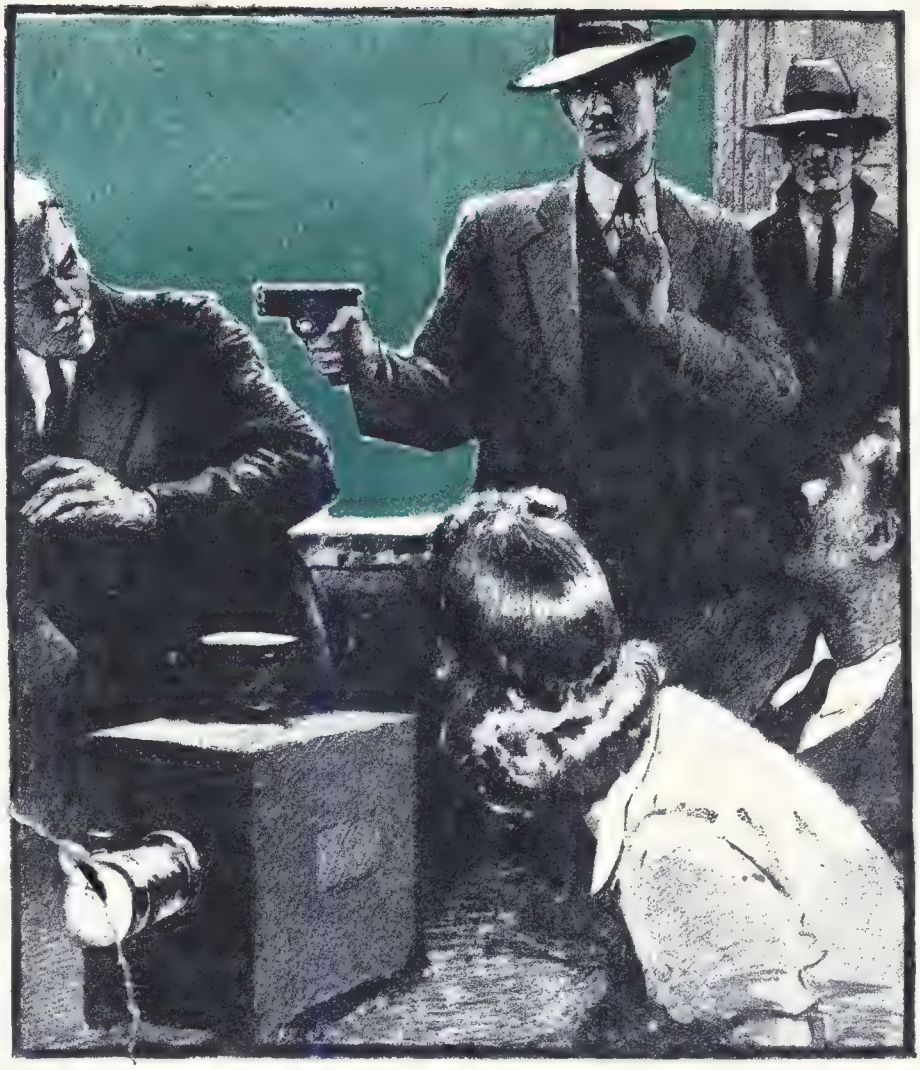
She opened her handbag, took out the emerald and set it on the desk where it got the full benefit of the light. With the glass Stuart handed her, she focused on the stone and uttered an exclamation.

"Oh—the Sphinx! Why, Bill, that's wonderful—perfect as can be, too!"

"Get a good steady look—right into the heart of the stone!" he advised, settling back and getting out his cigarettes. "I'll stop chattering and let you get the full effect."

HE sat smoking and silent, watching her, liking her capacity for silence. She had nothing to say, and did not break into unnecessary spurts of words. Also, he liked to look at her face.

That replica—if it were a replica—ought to be along pretty soon, he reflected, since speed would have been an essential part of Hartley's scheme to keep his victim satisfied and unthinking. It would be interesting to see if an exact replica had been made; one of glass could be turned out quickly, no doubt. If so, he wondered how the real could be told from the false. Without a glass, they would probably look exactly alike. Still, the tiny Sphinx-figure could hardly be duplicated so exactly.



"This stone's worth dying for—and to you it means only money. You fool!"

The girl caught her breath. She was interested now; the thing had taken hold of her. She steadied, and settled down to intent gazing. So, thought Stuart, it had not been merely his fervid imagination last night! The play of emotions in her face was fascinating to see, but he could not read them.

"I see what you mean, Bill," she murmured. "Wonderful!"

"Tell me what you get, when you feel like it," he put in, and she nodded.

Time passed; she sat entranced, and remembering how oblivious he had himself been to the passing of time, Stuart waited patiently. At length she straightened up and sighed, then turned to him, radiance in her face.

"Bill, I—I can't give this up!" she breathed. "At least, of course I must—but I'll hate to do it. Why, it seems to inspire such downright beauty—that's the only word for it: *beauty!* That can't be what Chuck meant."

"I didn't get that at all," dissented Stuart. "I tell you: probably it's different with everyone—causes a sort of auto-suggestion, merely wakens what's latent in the mind! That stands to reason, Penny. There's nothing eerie or occult about it; you can no doubt get the same effect by looking into any gem with a glass. In this one the flaws are so marked that it's not like an empty crystal, but a full one."

"Maybe," she agreed doubtfully. "Yet it's a lovely sensation. I'd like to go on and on looking—I'm like a child with a delightful new toy!"

"I know that feeling—I'd the same craving, yet I had been sitting for two hours with it last night. And that's bad, my dear; it's a yielding to the infatuation, to the dominance of the stone. You're going to put it up right now. There's only one safe place for it—in the hotel safe. And since you're the owner, come along and deposit it."

She grimaced at this, then looked at him, perplexed.

"You weren't in earnest about—about murder?"

"Absolutely. I took it out of a dead's man's hand, if you must know."

At this, she shivered, then thrust the glass at him.

"All right, take it. We'll go to the desk. I don't understand this, any of it. I think I'm a bit afraid, to be honest."

"I think you'd better be, and that's honest too," he said gravely, and rose. "I'm pretty thoroughly balled up about Hartley's words and everything; until Sir Evart comes, I'll be all at sea. You be sure to lock your door tonight. This thing has me jittery, I admit."

They sought the desk together. Here Penny wrapped the Sphinx Emerald in her handkerchief and put it into the big envelope the clerk handed her, sealed it, wrote her name where indicated, and turned to Stuart.

"A breath of this crisp, wonderful air, before turning in. Eh?"

They sauntered out to the street. Stuart kept his eyes open, saw nothing alarming, and after a turn about the Plaza they came back to the hotel. As they came in the clerk held up a hand to Stuart.

"I think you made a reservation for tomorrow—a Mr. Buckson?"

"Yes—Sir Evart Buckson."

"Just had a wire from him. He'll be here about noon. Good-night!"

Stuart saw Penny home, left her at the door, and they arranged to meet at nine in the morning for breakfast. He went to his own room, opened the window, and read himself to sleep with a magazine. Yet he slept poorly, waking often, and when he closed his eyes he dreamed unpleasantly. At a little after eight he phoned Penny.

"Good morning! How's everything?" he inquired, on getting her.

"Just lovely! No bugaboos or nocturnal prowlers, thanks."

He hung up.

"I'm a fool," he told himself happily. "Worrying over nothing. Letting a little chiseling crook throw a man-sized scare into me! Now, the hell with all that! No more nonsense. There's not a thing Hartley can do, without tying himself up even more rigidly, so I'd better forget him. And yet—that man in the trailer was certainly dead as a door-nail!"

An ugly fact; but its importance lessened with sunlight and breakfast and a radiant Penny. While they were at the table, a page fetched Stuart a yellow envelope, and he signed for it, with a grimace.

"Word that our boss won't get here," he predicted, tearing at it. "Or that his plane is down somewhere or—Whoops! Look at this—would you look at it!"

He waved the telegram at her; they read it together: a long night-letter from the Douglas people, in reply to the letter he had sent on his arrival here. Not only did it welcome his inquiry and request him to name an arrival date in California, but it was signed by one S. E. C. Bloom.

"Old Razz Bloom!" Stuart exclaimed delightedly. "He was with me in Egypt, see? And I never dreamed he was with that company! Say, this is luck of the finest kind, Penny! I'm fixed for good! Wants me as his assistant—great! Now we can eat, sure enough!"

"*We?*" she queried.

"Er—rhetorically speaking," Stuart evaded in some confusion. "Me for the West Coast, you bet! I'll wire back that I can start work the end of the week; Sir Evart should clean up the emerald business in a day or so."

Nice theorizing, anyway.

Chapter Six

WHEN Sir Evart Buckson arrived, Stuart and Penny were at the airport to meet him. In her purse Penny carried a tiny box that arrived by special delivery airmail, forwarded from New York to catch her here on this bright Sunday morning. In the box and carefully bedded in cotton was the replica of the Sphinx Emerald which Hartley had caused to be made in Chicago—a replica of the gem now reposing in the hotel safe, so perfect in hue and shape that it would have fooled Stuart even on close scrutiny! The tiny figure of the Sphinx was well made.

"It would have tricked me completely," said Penny. "Is it an emerald, Bill?"

"Can't be," said Stuart. "Sir Evart said that Chick's find was a unique stone. Tuck it away. When we get back to the hotel you get hold of the real one, and we'll spring 'em both on Sir Evart at lunch."

She nodded.

The genial Briton met them delightedly and gave Stuart a questioning look.

"Everything under control, at the moment," said Stuart. "I have a taxi here, so hop in and we'll go to the hotel. Your bag can follow. I take it the first thing is a square meal."

"You're a mind-reader," said Sir Evart.

"We've a lot of talking to do, too," put in Penny. "And Mr. Lattimer wants you to call him at once. He came to the hotel last night and Bill rather shoved him off. I think Bill's been seeing things in his sleep."

"More correct than you know," chuckled Stuart. "We'll talk at the table."

At the hotel, Sir Evart checked in, got some mail that awaited him, and disappeared into a phone booth. He came out, looking grave.

"Lattimer will come here later this afternoon," he said. "So until then we can catch up on happenings."

They settled at a table a little apart from others, and when the ordering had been accomplished, Stuart went into his story. Penny laid on the table the real and false emeralds, and Sir Evart examined them through a jeweler's glass while he listened.

"You're sure that man in the trailer was dead?" he asked then.

Stuart nodded to the sharp question.

"Cold and stiff. But that's not all. Last evening, or rather yesterday, Hartley was here openly, using his real name of Monckton—"

He went on to tell of the astonishing interview. Penny, who had been rendered speechless by his story of the trailer, watched him with anxious eyes. Sir Evart listened closely but made no comment until Stuart had finished.

"I don't pretend to understand it," he vouchsafed, with a shake of the head, "but when you monkeyed with Hartley you burned your fingers. He's hot stuff; yet I fancy we need lose no worry over him."

Stuart laughed. "I'm losing none—unless he accuses me of murdering his pal."

"Forget it! A sneak thief—that's his level. Your only danger was lest the taxi-driver talk; but the man's gone away, and I think you've nothing to fear. Hartley won't try to accuse you, since he can't stand any investigation himself. He has no doubt seen Miss Morrison here and thinks you're acting for and with her. He may have already seen and recognized me, also. Anything's possible, but don't worry."

"Just what do you propose doing?"

"First, accept your unuttered challenge to pick the true from the false." Sir Evart regarded the two emeralds with a smiling glance. "Second, unpack—or first unpack, then play with the stones. Third, meet Lattimer and get rid of responsibility and probably of the Sphinx Emerald as well. In this wild and woolly West of yours, it's a bit perilous to have the thing kicking about loose."

Stuart grinned. "You expect scalping parties to jump out from behind every bush, do you? Hardly likely, in a hotel like this!"

They all laughed together. The Briton had accomplished his purpose of turning the subject from the gravely ominous to a lighter aspect.

After the meal Stuart accompanied Sir Evart to his room, where Penny promised to join them in five minutes. He perceived that the older man was not so carefree. Sir Evart took his arm gravely.

"Now that we're alone I can speak plainly. I didn't want to alarm Miss

Penny, you see. I must tell you that our friend Hartley or Monckton is somewhat noted for his ruthless ingenuity and persistence. If the emerald were not worth a farthing he would still pursue it indefatigably. Thank heaven, we should be done with the affair today! It's a perilous business, I'm afraid."

His bluff, sturdy personality was heartening. He said what he thought, without waste of words. Stuart scarcely shared his prescience of danger—he refused to consider Hartley as a threat—yet he had a certainty that they were not through with the man.

Sir Evart emptied his single bag quickly, and Penny appeared. The early afternoon sun poured in at the window, and into the flood of light Sir Evart moved his writing-desk. On it he laid the Sphinx Emerald and its duplicate.

"Now for your challenge to differentiate these two gems!" he said cheerfully, with his best professional lecturing manner. "You'll note that they have a cabochon or round-top shape, yet there are facets visible. I'm about to impart to you an extremely simple test, most valuable to all jewelers, especially where a faceted stone is concerned, yet it can be applied even where there are no facets. The two gems are side by side in the direct sunlight."

From his pocket he took a white card.

"Now, I'll hold this card thus, a few inches from the gems, in the direction of the sun, so as to get the reflections from within the gems on the card. The reflections of certain material, such as diamond or glass or garnet, are single. Other material, beryl for example, is double-refractive—that is, the reflecting facets throw double images. Look closely as I move the card from one gem to the other. Emerald is double-refracting, though only feebly—"

He focused with the card to get the reflection. As he moved it from one gem to the other, Stuart could instantly perceive the difference in the refractions.

"IT'S clear as can be!" exclaimed Penny, and touched one. "This is glass—it must be the replica!"

"Correct," said Sir Evart. "The test is quite sure. The card merely assists the eye, you see—an expert can look into the gem and examine the facets for himself, but the doubling of the lines is not always easy to perceive. I'll take this real gem and be responsible for it. In fact, I'm most anxious to examine it. Stuart, suppose you take the glass replica. We'll keep them quite separate."

With a nod, Stuart dropped the fake into his pocket, not bothering with the box and cotton. Sir Evart sat down and lengthily examined the emerald through his glass.

"Remarkable!" he said at last. "It's obvious why credulous people have credited this stone with occult powers. All rank bosh, of course! I noticed that the imitation has bubbles, too, but not angular ones. They're created by striking the material before it cools off. Quite simple; but in dealing with gems, simplicity is usually very clever. I take it, my dear, you still wish to dispose of the genuine stone?"

Penny smiled. "I do and I don't. It's a lovely plaything; but if it's as valuable as you say, I need the money. And after Bill's story, it does give me a shiver."

"Right; then we'll attend to it. Don't however, blame the stone for the things that happen," said the older man earnestly. "It, and every other famous gem, has no doubt a history passing through many phases of death and murder. After all, death is not really tragic; it's an ordinary concomitant of all life. This gem, with its microscopic Sphinx, is unique."

"What will happen to it?" Stuart queried thoughtfully. "I mean, how will it end? An end must sometime come, whether it just drops out of sight or is crushed or falls into the ocean—"

Sir Evart smiled. "Well, it dropped into the Nile rather lately—yet here it is before us. Gems last for thousands of years, but I suppose they do some day come to an end of some sort. Lattimer will certainly be deeply interested in this stone. He's a wealthy man and can afford to pay well; so for us, I presume the gem will come to an end in his collection, at least temporarily. He lives outside the city a little way—I've never seen his house. It's said to be very fine."

Glass in eye, he bent over the stone again. His fascination was entirely understandable to Stuart and Penny.

"Do you suppose that Hartley, or Monckton, looked into it?" said Penny.

Sir Evart straightened, pushed the stone away as though repulsing it.

"Certainly. Its influence is extraordinary; he fell under it, and that would account for his mad persistence in pursuing it. This color is poor at first sight, but the stone has deeper spots and proper cutting would improve it vastly, in value. It'll be interesting to see Lattimer's reaction to the stone. Well, my friends, suppose that we settle the whole problem this afternoon. What are your plans?"

"I don't know—I haven't thought about it," confessed Penny.

"I have; you've brought me luck, Sir Evart, or the emerald has." Stuart laughed. "An old Army pal is with an airplane company on the West Coast, and I've secured a place, thanks to him, with them."

"Congratulations! You're going out right from here?"

"I think so. I may get married first."

"Eh?" Sir Evart shot him a look. Stuart was aware of Penny's gaze, but carefully avoided meeting it. "Who's the lucky girl?"

"Well, it's not settled. I haven't asked her yet. I'm merely hoping."

The Briton laughed heartily. "Well, the best luck in the world! Er, Miss Penny?"

Penny looked down. "Oh, I'm sure—yes, of course!" she said.

At this instant the telephone rang. Sir Evart answered.

"Oh, yes, yes; send him up, please!" He put down the instrument. "Lattimer. Now we'll see shortly."

"Want me to clear out?" asked Stuart. "After all, I'm an interloper."

"My dear fellow, don't be absurd!" exclaimed Sir Evart warmly. "We're all in this together. A company matter, as it were, so sit down."

Stuart relaxed.

LATTIMER arrived; he and Sir Evart greeted each other warmly; he shook hands with Penny, and his eyes twinkled at Stuart, who laughed as their hands met.

"I'm frightfully sorry about my rudeness last night," said Stuart. "I was jittery, that was all."

"Don't mention it," said Lattimer. "I know just how you were feeling, Stuart. They found a dead man today on some property I own, and I had to look him over—just came from there. Some poor devil in a trailer— What's wrong? Do you people know anything about the case?"

"I do," said Stuart. "Too much, in fact. Sit down and I'll give you the yarn. Since it concerns the emerald, you're entitled to it anyhow. At least, I presume it's the same man; corpses aren't strewn by wholesale over New Mexico. A reddish-brown trailer on the north edge of town? Bled to death?"

"From a knife-wound in his hip—correct. Well, this is most amazing!" Lattimer seated himself. Despite the white hair he was vigorous and full of life, keenly alert. Well balanced, thought Stuart; an idealist, perhaps a bit ruthless.

"Yes," he went on, "the fellow was merely a transient who had camped on my land with his trailer—a guest of mine, as it were. I think the police got his name, but it meant nothing to me."

"It might have, except for Stuart, here," Sir Evart said, and got out his Turkish cigarettes. "Go ahead, Stuart, and say your say."

The latter complied, again recounting the happenings since his landing here. It seemed that Lattimer had vaguely heard of Monckton or Hart-

ley, but did not know him; over the trailer story he evinced a keenly absorbed interest, and became wide-awake at hearing of Hartley's call at the hotel.

"Good!" he exclaimed then. "Something will come of that, I predict; there'll be some fun. This rascal is a sharp 'un. I venture that he already knows of my connection with you."

"You seem pleased," put in Penny.

Lattimer smiled, his eyes sparkling.

"I am, young lady. I enjoy life, and that means the conflicts of life. This chap Hartley sets himself against the world? Excellent! Let him make good or take the consequences! Life in these parts is raw and rich; things happen. Here's a rascal kills his pal—and that dead man in the trailer must be paid for."

Every eye was upon him. "Indeed?" Sir Evart asked. "A crime, you mean?"

Lattimer nodded. "Precisely. How or why it'll be paid for remains to be seen; I'm not speaking of the law, understand. I imagine from all you say that Hartley will act with vicious speed and precision, perhaps this very day. Good; let's leave it at that."

Stuart, wondering at the man, spoke out.

"Well, if you'll enjoy a tussle with Hartley, you're welcome to it. We'll be glad to present you with the feud."

Lattimer smiled. "Right! Look here, now. My house is empty, my servants are away till tomorrow—a Mexican couple do for me—but it's a good house, well stocked. These hillside and cañon roads are a bit ticklish at times, to strangers. I suggest that you let me run you all out there now and cook up a spaghetti supper for you, display some of my specimens, and bring you back later. Eh? Can do?"

"I fancy so." Sir Evart nodded. "It'd be a treat, for my part."

Penny nodded. "It would indeed, and I might come in handy at the supper."

"Done, then!" cried Lattimer with a lusty, hearty ring in his voice. "And if we have any interference from Mr. Hartley, we'll make him welcome also! It'll take an hour to run out there to Spider Cañon. But I'm forgetting something—I came here to look at the Sphinx Emerald, my friends. Aren't you going to show it?"

HE moved to the desk by the window, stuck a jeweler's glass in his eye, and proceeded to examine the stone. No one spoke. Stuart saw that the visitor had become tense, absorbed, utterly concentrated, a slow amazement growing in his manner as the stone took hold of him. Sir Evart looked on keenly, and met Penny's eye with a nod and a smile.

At length Lattimer removed the glass, and looked up.

"I'd have taken oath that no such stone could exist," he said slowly. "But it does. Here's the proof." He held a match to his pipe, puffed it alight, and leaned back. "I've heard of the Sphinx Emerald," he went on. "Fantastic little pastiches, historic tales—never believed 'em. Now I do."

"Then it's real!" exclaimed Penny.

Lattimer nodded at her.

"Yes, my dear. Real. Worthless as a gem, priceless as what it is. I congratulate you on owning such a thing. What price have you set on it?"

"That's for Sir Evart to say," she replied. "I know nothing of prices."

Lattimer looked at the Briton. "He does. What say, Sir Evart?"

"Hm! I had thought of asking a thousand pounds."

"I'll give double that—nine thousand dollars. Eh?"

"Done."

To lighten the tension that was upon the room, Stuart reached out to the desk and laid beside the emerald its imitation.

"I'll kick in with Hartley's contribution to the pot," he said. "They should go together."

Lattimer unfolded a check-book and dipped a pen.

"I suggest, Sir Evart, that since it's Sunday, we might visit the desk together with the check. The manager knows me quite well and he'll handle it; you'll get the cash first thing in the morning. Eh?"

The Briton nodded, not too happily.

"If I were wealthier, I'd never let the gem go to you—even though it belongs in your collection!"

Lattimer chuckled and handed over the check. Sir Evart endorsed it and displayed it to Penny. From his pocket the collector produced some bits of soft tissue, in which he wrapped the Sphinx Emerald and its replica.

"My car's outside," he said. "Suppose we meet there in five minutes. Ready, Sir Evart? We'll have to locate the hotel manager."

They departed together. Penny started for the door; Stuart checked her.

"Wait; I want a word. You're a rich woman; going to buy a Cadillac with your new wealth, I suppose?"

She looked at him.

"Wealth? A few thousand dollars? Half that price goes to you, of course."

"We had no such agreement. Nix on that: nayo, hoss!"

She smiled. "Since you're dropping into groovy cat language, I'll just igg your nayo, Mr. Stuart. You've nothing to say about it."

"I control my bank account, and sha'n't take what's not mine."

"Half that money, after Sir Evart's commission comes out, goes to you," she said firmly. "You most certainly earned it, and then some! Since that is now settled, hadn't you better run along and look up the prospective bride?"

He nodded thoughtfully. "Yeah, I'm doing that—doing it right now. Okay—I'll take your money—in fact, I have to do it, since that's my only salvation."

Her brows lifted as she scrutinized him. "I don't get you—or, to keep groovy, I don't dig you. What gives?"

"Forget that stuff and be yourself, Penny," he said, regarding her seriously. "This is a new rôle for me; I had to jump at any possible approach. And the job would be impossible if you were wallowing in riches and me just a mechanic or something of the sort. That's why I must take you up and reduce your wad by half—if you agree to it."

"What on earth are you jabbering about?" she demanded, a twinkle in her eyes.

"You, darling. I'm in earnest—do I have to spell it all out? Go on my knees? It ain't done these days! Admitted, I'm no brilliant whirlwind, but I do love you. I want you to go along westward the whole way and get married with real orange blossoms in your hair. Will you do it?"

She broke into a smile. "I just had to make you say it, Bill."

"Say what?"

"'I love you'—and sure I'll do it!"

SUDDENLY Penny tore herself free with a horrified cry.

"Bill! I must get ready—we have to meet them at the car!"

"Right," said he. "And I must see at the desk about plane reservations. Okay, dear—one more for luck—"

Another two minutes and he was making his way to the desk. At a discreet hint from the clerk he wiped lipstick from his cheek; then he found no reservations available until a three A.M. plane, which would land them in Los Angeles Monday noon. There ensued a hasty conference with Sir Evart and Lattimer and the hotel manager regarding finances. This resulted in a general exchange of checks, Lattimer's check being honored by the hotel and others issued in exchange, to the general satisfaction of everyone. Penny showed up in time to receive her money, Stuart took up his reservations for Los Angeles, and Lattimer promised to deliver them at the hotel in ample time to make the plane.

With that, they all piled out to Lattimer's big car and got off amid laughter and congratulations, a merry foursome forgetful of everything except the moment.

Lattimer, whose family was away, lived only a few miles outside the city, but the road was one of wonders. He drove past elaborate residences of millionaires and famed artists, displayed the restored ruins of cliff-dwellers

"A wounded grizzly would be safer to look up," said Lattimer. "Give me that gun, Stuart."

along sheer rock walls, showed them scenic glories in the long sunset, and finally entered Spider Cañon. Here the road to his hillside home was narrow and required the most cautious driving, but he took it at fair speed with a laugh of unconcern.

"A road isn't dangerous if you know it, and I'm a good driver," he declared. "And no one else lives here—it's practically a private road, you see. A drop would mean a three-hundred-foot fall, but I don't intend to drop, so rest easy. . . . Here we are."

The house showed ahead: a huge hillside structure of timber and adobe, the walls decorated with colored tiles. They drove into a huge courtyard large enough for a dozen cars. All was spacious, and the interior of the house was softly gay with rich Chimayo and other Indian weaves.

Everything here was electric. The kitchen and dining-room were on a separate level, and with four people to take hold, supper became a joyous thing. Penny got a great caldron of spaghetti boiling; a sauce was mixed, wine was produced, and places were set in the dining-room, where Lattimer touched off a ready-laid fire in the corner hearth.

Time flew rapidly. Presently the meal was dished up; and under the soft indirect lights of the dining-room the four gathered about it hungrily. Sir Evart launched into stories, Lattimer capped them, Stuart spoke of flying in Egypt, and everyone ate enormously. Coffee and cigars for the men put an end to the meal. Penny offered to clean up, but all pitched in and lightened the labor.

At last Lattimer led the way to his "den"—a luxurious room fully thirty feet long, on the uphill side of the house. Here were more precious Indian weaves and cabinets of old silver and the now extinct turquoise of New Mexico; and against this background, gems. Precious stones, ancient and modern, beautiful and ugly, most of them in cabinets recessed in the wall and invisible until opened, when lights switched on.

Here were gems of all descriptions, from matrix to finished and polished stone; curios of form and cutting and color from every part of the world. Some were historic stones, some were priceless, many were worthless yet of intense interest as a matter of curiosity and replete with story. One cabinet of emeralds had every known variety—ancient Egyptian and Siberian, even some of the actual stones seized by Pizarro's men from the Incas, and upon these Lattimer waxed garrulous. He was a walking mine of information, for his knowledge was erudite and beyond exhaustion.

"All this is positively incredible!" exclaimed Sir Evart, lost in marveling admiration. "But isn't it dangerous for you and your family to live here in the wilderness amid a treasury of gems, unprotected?"

Their host chuckled. "Well guarded, if not protected. These cabinets are of steel. Only one at a time can be opened; the others are protcted by a master switch that sets electronic devices at work. Try to break into them and your picture is taken and a general alarm is given at Santa Fe. The house is fireproof; hence, insurance is low."

"But one cabinet at a time might be looted?"

"Might be, yes; only under certain conditions, and even then every highway would be guarded by State police within twenty minutes—and hereabout there are few highways, my friend." Lattimer took the Sphinx Emerald from his pocket, placed it on the desk; beside it he put the replica.

"Actually, these two might be stolen," he went on, "yet nothing else could be touched. Once these have been photographed and placed in a cabinet, they're as safe as all the others. Here, take fresh cigars; the evening's young, and I'll show you a bit of scientific magic."

On the desk he placed what looked like a stereopticon, connecting it to a wall socket. It faced a bare spot on the opposite wall fifteen feet distant.

"This is actually an electronic enlarger of use in examining any translucent stone or crystal," he went on. "It assesses flaws, color values, and so forth; at the moment, we'll simply view the emerald, which is translucent, and the glass replica, which appears the same but is really transparent. Stuart, will you click that switch near the door, please?"

Stuart complied and the room was plunged into darkness, broken only by the glimmer of the stereopticon and the glow of light on the opposite wall. Lattimer put the replica into his machine; the glowing expanse became a soft green. This, as Lattimer focused the light, showed the flaws in the glass very faintly.

"Poor," said their host. "Obviously glass, not a crystalline structure,

and no life in the color; it's artificial and singly refracting, showing little. Watch the difference when I slip in the real beryl."

The replica came out; the wall expanse showed clear white light—then, as the Sphinx Emerald went in, a murmur of astonishment and delight broke from them all.

Now the glowing expanse became alive as the light was focused. The color had depth, the flaws took on form and shape, the background stretched interminably; the stone itself, with all its magic perspective, was in this enormous enlargement. Clear stood the Sphinx, composed of the stone's various flaws. The color values blended delicately in shades of green.

One sensed patterns in the blending, exactly as when gazing into the emerald under a glass. Stuart felt the same sensations—the uplift and ecstasy, the odd uneasiness. He heard Penny's murmur about its glorious beauty; he caught Sir Evart's praise of its feeling of power and wisdom; yet he did not like it.

Lattimer shifted the stone; the whole scene changed, yet to Stuart the feeling persisted. The strange angular flaws took on new forms, the color deepened.

Lattimer's voice broke upon the darkened room with a touch of awe.

"My friends, we're seeing what no one in the world has ever before glimpsed—the living heart of this emerald! It's a thing beyond words. No wonder it takes hold of a person like a magic draught! I shall work with this stone in different degrees of light, register it in every angle, plumb all its secrets, gain from it a full and complete record of its mystery—"

In the partial darkness of the room there was movement. Lattimer's voice abruptly fell silent; feet clattered on the floor. A new voice rose, hoarse and excited, in deadly menace:

"No, you don't! Stand still—don't move—on with those lights, Jack!"

It was the voice of Hartley—or Monckton.

Chapter Seven

"QUIET, everyone!" This was Hartley again. He stood beside Lattimer, an ugly automatic pistol in one hand, slowly swinging it about. He said something to Lattimer, who stepped away and disconnected his machine. Hartley, with his free hand, fumbled until he got the Sphinx Emerald free, and pocketed it.

At the doorway stood another man, a mask on his face, pistol in hand. Neither Stuart nor Sir Evart moved; Lattimer moved toward a chair and spoke composedly.

"Do as he says, please. I want no bloodshed; insurance will cover the loss of the stone."

Hartley twisted a lip at him.

"Aye, that's all you think of—*money!* This stone's worth dying for a hundred times—and to you it means only money. You fool!"

The look of him was pure tension. His features were drawn and twitchy, his eyes were wild, enlarged, showing the whites beneath the pupils, and he was livid. His companion spoke up.

"If you've got it, let's go. Don't touch a thing else here, mind."

Hartley must have witnessed the enlarged view of the stone; it had maddened him. He snarled when Lattimer said:

"I'll give you a fat sum and let you go unsought, if you'll give up that—"

"Be damned to you!" Hartley's voice bit and seared. "You and your money! As though I'd sell out to you, after trailing this thing here from Egypt!" His words shrilled with added vehemence; their slight trace of accent was intensified; he waved the pistol to and fro, almost in a frenzy, as he went on:

"Sell—buy and sell—that's all you swine know! As though I'd give up that emerald at any price! It's mine; it stays with me. One of the great things of the world! Let me go unsought, would you? That's a joke! You couldn't keep me from getting the stone—now get it back if you can! All right, Jack—get outside and start the car. I'll be along in two minutes."

Watching everyone intently, Hartley backed away toward the door; his companion turned and disappeared. Stuart made a motion as though to rise. Lattimer shook his head.

"Don't," he said quietly. "Never oppose a mad dog. Let others do it."

Stuart relaxed at the words, wondering at their meaning, but Hartley vented a snarl.

"You fool! 'Mad dog' if you like, but smarter than the lot of you! I warn you, don't start in pursuit of me, or you'll suffer. Don't stir from your chairs for a good five minutes; mind the caution, or you'll be sorry. There's blood on this stone already, and there'll be more if you force me—"

He stood glaring at them for a moment. Stuart was not minded to dare that madman's weapon, especially since Lattimer seemed to have some scheme in mind. Hartley put out his free hand to the electric switch.

"Five minutes, now," he repeated warningly. *Click!* The room went dark. Upon the sudden blackness rose the voice of Lattimer:

"Steady, everyone!"

A moment passed. Stuart came to his feet; the switch clicked again and the lights came on. Sir Evart was swearing softly. Lattimer smiled and stepped rapidly to the desk.

"Sorry you had this experience, Miss Morrison. I'll soon have the police after those fellows." He lifted the telephone and listened; his face changed. "Hello! Clever gentry; the wire's cut. . . . Who has the time?"

Stuart glanced at his watch. "Five to twelve."

"Hm! My car's outside—another in the garage. There's a house three miles from here where I can get a phone and rout out the State police. I can get you back to your hotel."

"Forget it!" broke in Stuart. "I'm going with you and see this thing to a finish!"

"I want to see it finished, too—after all, they got the emerald, my emerald," said Penny. "I'll wait here until you come back, Mr. Lattimer. Let our plans go; they don't matter now."

Lattimer broke into a laugh. "But you can't stay alone—eh, Sir Evart? Right; you two stop here; Stuart and I will take a flyer. You two make yourselves at home."

"BUT they got the emerald!" wailed Penny.

"Cheer up—we got the cash," Stuart put in. "And if Lattimer doesn't get the stone back, he'll collect insurance."

Lattimer beckoned, and Stuart followed. Lights snapped on; they went through the house to the courtyard. Lattimer opened the garage and went inside. He came out carrying a rifle and handed this to Stuart.

"Can you use it? Good man! There's a place where we can see their car, far below us; no hurry, either. No other car on this road, you know, no chance of any mistake. Cripple them if we can, then call the cops. Hop in!"

Stuart examined the rifle, then obeyed. Lattimer's door slammed, the engine roared, they were moving. The lights flung a broad beam on the turn and the road; the car slid away, the house vanished. The magazine rifle was loaded; a dropping fire would carry for an incredible distance, Stuart knew.

He felt let down, almost cheated. He realized that in this State of vast distances and few highways the State police could quickly close all roads; yet it had all been so simple, so lacking in dramatic values! Hartley was gone with the gem, but the police would collar him; another phase in the history of the Sphinx Emerald would be closed. Was that all?

The car slowed at a bend. Lattimer spoke calmly.

"Your ball, Stuart! Look down, past the right fender—you'll see the car lights down there when it comes. Better set your sights high and give 'em all you can. It'll be a chance shot, anyhow—a good half-mile below us; you'll have about ten seconds in which to fire."

Watching, Stuart steadied his rifle, cocked it, waited. Lattimer had shut off the engine; the night was quiet. A fool thing, he reflected; no one could hope to hit anything this way—

A THRILL seized him. Far below appeared radiance—the forelight of a coming car. His nerves leaped; he lifted the rifle. The radiance grew into a stronger light; this became two headlights. Stuart aimed as well as he could, pressed the shoulder-butt close, and fired. The weapon kicked and kicked—he got in four shots in all before the target vanished.

"Excellent!" approved Lattimer, starting the engine. "Any sort of hit, if it does nothing else, will mark their car beyond escape. Throw the rifle anywhere in back; now we'll bend all energies to getting hold of the cops. Afraid I'll have to wake up everybody in that house too, before I can get to the phone."

He had to do exactly that.

Stuart sat in the car out under the stars for what seemed an interminable time. A cautious native had let Lattimer into the house, a tiny shack above the road, and the rest was silence. Presently the glow of a cigarette announced Lattimer, who came to the car with a jovial excitement.

"Upon my word, Stuart, I believe we've got 'em!"

"You got the cops?"

"Oh, sure! And more: Headquarters had just received a complaint by phone from old Tom Parkhurst, who lives up on Gaspar Road by the abandoned Mexican smithy, that a broken-down car had stopped by there. A shooting had taken place, and there's a dead man in the car." The engine had roared into life as Lattimer spoke, and now the lights went on and the car jumped. "We can get there ahead of the police. It's our man, no doubt of it; the two bandits had a row—"

The rest was lost in a rush of wind, as the car leaped into speed.

Stuart said nothing; he just hung on and hoped for the best, as Lattimer took the cañon curves at mad speed, evidently determined to beat the State police to the spot in question. After all, he thought grimly, the Sphinx Emerald might yet come back to its lawful owner!

The car swooped into cañon dips, took the upgrades with zooming power. If it was mad driving, it was also skillful. Lattimer grunted out scraps of speech: the abandoned smithy had been taken over by an old artist named Parkhurst, who lived in a shack nearby, and kept up the smithy for the sake of its picturesque appearance; a lonely spot and ripe for murder.

Stuart hoped that his bullets had done no murder. Not that he had the least compunction, but the idea of pouring lead into a car on the lonely highway rankled in him. Five miles had been covered, he reckoned, when a word from Lattimer told him the smithy was just ahead and warned him to have the rifle ready—needless warning! A light flickered at them—here was old Parkhurst pottering about a car that stood just off the highway. He hailed them with gleeful recognition of Lattimer.

"You beat the cops to it!" he sang out. "Look-a-here—funny how this car got crippled; looks like bullets had ripped this rear tire—"

"Never mind that," put in Stuart. "What about the dead man?"

"Shooting took place right here," said Parkhurst. "That's what woke me up. Feller's in the back seat. Here's the flashlight. You can have him; one look was enough for me! He got shot in the face at close range, like he had tried to kill the driver and got his needin's himself."

"That apparently is precisely what happened," said Lattimer, taking the light and looking into the car. "This is the man who was with Hartley, Stuart. Let the cops have him—but I want to know where Hartley is! He can't be far away. He didn't come up to your house, Tom?"

"No," said Parkhurst. "But if you ask me, the trail from here to the smithy in them trees is plain to see. The other man is liable to be hurt too; there was more'n one shot fired."

"Then a wounded grizzly would be safer to look up than our friend," said Lattimer. "Give me that gun, Stuart. You take the flashlight and throw it on the trail."

This last was no more than a path heading in among the trees toward a half-visible structure, the smithy.

"It ain't locked," sang out Parkhurst. "You fellers better wait for the cops, too. Liable to run into hot lead yonder."

Stuart disregarded him and started along the path, shooting the light well ahead. Lattimer followed closely. A wide front door of the smithy stood ajar.

Lattimer uttered a word of warning.

"He may shoot at the light. You'd better keep back."

Stuart thought so himself; however, he was not saying so.

"I'll take it edgeways," he replied. "You wait till I light up the place."

He slipped to the side of the entrance, threw his light suddenly into the interior, and followed around the edge of the door—

"Thanks for the light," said Hartley. "I need it. Don't shut it off."

The man stood there, unmasked, insolent, defiant. Beside him was the hood of the smithy; all trace of past fires was gone from the bed. Against the anvil Hartley leaned, a small sledge in his hand. Upon the flat face of the anvil was a spot of green.

"I've got you covered, Monckton!" came Lattimer's voice.

Hartley looked up and laughed.

"Don't be more of a fool than you naturally are," he riposted. "My pal got me! Stay back, that's all! A minute more is all I need, and I'm good for that. I said you'd never regain the emerald, and you sha'n't."

Stuart saw now that there was something dark around the man's feet! Blood—a pool of it forming.

"I'm going," went on Hartley, "and the emerald's going with me, understand? Gad, what luck finding this place ready and waiting for me. The gods must have arranged it. . . . I'm finished; my blasted pal tried to do for me and get away with the stone, but he wasn't man enough to manage it—nor are you, damn you!"

"Stop!" cried Lattimer. "Don't be a madman! I'll make no charges against you. Turn back the stone, take the money I offered—I'll see that you're taken care of!"

Hartley laughed. "Go to hell!" his voice shrilled. "I'm done for, and I'm taking the emerald with me; that's more than you can do!"

The sledge lifted in his hand—not high—above the greenish spot on the anvil. Lattimer came forward with a rush—but too late. The sledge fell, toppled to the floor, and Hartley lost balance and sprawled forward upon it.

The green spot had gone; only a greenish dust remained.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LATTIMER was at the wheel of his car, heading home, Stuart was beside him. "He beat us," Lattimer said. "Poor crippled, insane devil! His mind was warped, he was crazy about that stone—and to be honest with you, I don't blame him! It was a unique stone, like nothing else in the world; and now it's gone. Nothing now but bits of green dust, and a memory."

"You regret it; I don't," said Stuart. "I think you regret even Hartley's death. I don't; he was bad medicine. It was a stone, nothing more. I'm looking ahead to life, achievement—"

Lattimer laughed.

"A bit of stone—nothing more!" he said softly. "That is one viewpoint. What an epitaph, for a wonder of the world!"

"We can't help our different feelings," Stuart replied. "There's a wonder of the world waiting for me, up at your house, that I wouldn't swap for a dozen Sphinx Emeralds."

"And perhaps you're right, Stuart. I still have the replica, remember. I think I'll present it to the young lady—as a wedding gift, eh?"

And he laughed—but his laughter still was instinct with a sigh.

The Collar

STURDY FELLOWS, THE NORSEMEN, WHETHER AT FEUD OR FEAST OR FORAY—AS WITNESS THIS SPIRITED SAGA OF STERN ADVENTURE.

THE spring wind was blowing from dead ahead as the cutter worked south from Langoy. That made no difference; ten oars were sending the light craft along.

Gunnar grinned as a spatter of spray stung his brown-bearded cheek. It was good to hold a tiller again, to feel the lift and drive of a keel under him—after rusting ashore for a year!

Of course he had been glad for his brother's sake. Karli was a lively lad, fond of fine clothes and feasting. A boaster, a swaggerer, but the handsomest fellow in Halogaland. He had joined King Olav's bodyguard, while Gunnar had stayed to manage the island farm.

Now the fields were plowed and planted. Lambing was over, cattle had been driven to summer pasture. At last the stay-at-home was free for a faring—a short but lucky one, he hoped.

He was thinking of the wife he meant to win—the girl who had always treated him so kindly, and was such a skillful *husfroya*—as the cutter cleared the sound between Hindoy and Ostvaagoy. Immediately, however, his thoughts were turned to something not so pleasant.

The carl beside him, Tormod Bighand, shaded his eyes with a broad palm and grunted harshly: "Trouble ahead!"

A ship was anchored in the lee of a small island, waiting for the wind to change; the craft was a great dragon with a row of painted shields along the railing. Men were lounging on the benches and the sun struck fire from their helmets.

Gunnar squinted through sun-glare and flying spray. "That wave-walker belongs to Tore Hund of Biarkoy." he said. "What then?"

Tormod shifted uneasily on the thwart. "He may be at feud with you, because of your brother."

"It was another man who slew his kinsman." Gunnar shrugged a big shoulder. "Karli only pointed out the lawbreaker. At any rate, we can't change course, or Tore will think we fear him."

He steered straight, yet he couldn't help thinking of the odds. A war-ship against the little coasting-boat, half a hundred fighters against his twelve. His carls wore no mail; he himself was dressed in his best lynx-skin cap and woolen coat. They were on a peaceful journey.

As the cutter passed under the dragon's stern, with its carved, upcurling tail, a tall man scowled down from the afterdeck—a man with a hard, high-boned face and a long red mustache, his red hair lank under his polished helm. Though his scowling look did not change, he raised a hand in greeting.

Tormod puffed with relief. "Maybe the levies are being called," he guessed. "Maybe that's why he seems ready for fighting."

"We'd have been summoned too, in such a case," Gunnar answered. Nevertheless he shouted up, "Is there news of war?"

Tore the Hound shook his helmed head. "No more than usual," he called back. "The Danes are always threatening!"

The small craft sped on unhindered, and Tormod stretched his arms. "Now I can breathe! He obeys the King's command against quarreling."

Gunnar nodded soberly.

Quarreling had been the curse of Norway, he thought. Time and again Norsemen had fought each other, had disobeyed all rule. Blood feuds had weakened the land, so that foreign enemies had seized and held it, until Olav Haraldson had come to drive them out.

Olav Digre—Olav the Thick—was a good King. He kept the country safe, maintained law and order.

They were on Vestfiord now, quartering east for Tysfiord. To larboard were the rocky shores of Hindoy, blue

# of Jomale

by DE WITT NEWBURY

in the distance. Ahead rose the rugged fells of the mainland, still white with snow. Gunnar had been dozing while Tormod steered. He roused at the feel of a huge hand on his shoulder.

"What do you make of it?" the carl was asking.

A HIGH-SIDED vessel had come up from the south, on a converging course. It had a stout mast and a wide sail.

Gunnar blinked. "Only a merchantman." Then he noted the cross painted on the sail. "No, a King's ship!"

Now it was nearer. He saw a scarlet-coated figure at the side, topped by a gilded helm. He made out the laughing face adorned with a curly beard almost as yellow as the helm.

"Karli!" he shouted.

In a few minutes the two craft were beam to beam. The younger brother leaped aboard the cutter, handsome and happy.

"What brings you here?" Gunnar wondered.

"The King's business." And Karli laughed. "That's his ship—it sails better than it looks—and those are his men. Not guardsmen, of course; just ordinary drengs."

A dozen crewmen were grinning from the burden-ship. Lusty carls, each in a sound iron cap and a brynie of ring-mail. Their shields were painted with the Christian cross.

"Business in Tysfiord?" Gunnar asked again.

"I have some affairs of my own, as well. You are bound to cheer up your old friend, Ogmund the Bald, no doubt. I mean to comfort Grella Ogmund's-daughter!"

Gunnar felt his heart throb once and then beat more slowly. Karli had seemingly forgotten the girl when he left Halogaland. But if he had come again to ask for her? It would be youth for youth, and the older brother's mouth would be closed. He would not speak for Grella.

He had something to say to Karli, however. "Tore Hund is out with his dragon and fighting-gang. He may come this way when the wind shifts—and may bear you a grudge."

Karli lost his reckless look for a moment. "A grudge against a guardsman? Why, King Olav has made sure of Tore's friendship. And besides, I struck no blow."

"But a blow was struck, just the same."

"I was sailing in company with my fellow-guardsman, Asmund Grankelson, when a *skeid* came toward us and I recognized the steersman. I said, 'Here comes Selsbane, as they call him: The lad who murdered Sel, the stead-ward, and escaped justice.'

"Asmund said, 'I'll name my spear Sel's Avenger.' It was a thin spear with a graven head, the socket set with silver. 'Which is he?' Asmund asked.

" 'He sits at the tiller,' I told him. 'The one in the blue coat.'

" 'I'll give him a red coat!' Asmund swore. And he cast the spear so well that it struck Selsbane through from side to side."

Gunnar nodded, frowning. "I have heard the story. Everybody has heard it. And another, too: how the spitted body was carried home; and how Tore Hund pulled out the spear, and swore to use it in avenging his nephew's death."

OGMUND the Bald needed cheering, that was true enough.

Cutter and burden-ship lay at the landing, and the brothers were sitting at the feast-board in Ogmund's great timbered hall. Grella had filled the ale horns with her own hand, but her father could think of nothing but his troubles. He was a stalwart old fellow with a white beard and a shining forehead.

"It's hard dealing!" he complained, leaning across the board. "Olav Digre has taken most of my lands away, be-

cause I stick to the Old Gods, the faith of my ancestors!"

Karli answered briskly: "These are new times. I have taken the new faith, myself. All must do so who serve the King and hope for luck."

"What is Norway coming to?" Ogmund groaned. "Even my daughter says we should love peace and stop harrying for booty. What nonsense! And I, an old Viking, must turn Christian or be punished!"

Gunnar spoke gravely. "Turning is simple, Ogmund. You receive baptism, which is harmless enough, and you make the sign of the cross over your ale instead of Thor's hammer. Otherwise you remain upright and manly, as before."

"THE worst of it is," Ogmund fumed, "that Olav has given my lands to Tore of Biarkoy—who only pretends to be a Christian, and is a troll, to boot!"

"That is king-craft," explained Karli. "Tore may be a warlock, but he is the greatest chief in Halogaland. With enemies stirring abroad, it's wise to keep him friendly."

"I passed him on the way," Gunnar added. "In his dragon, armed as if for war."

Ogmund pounded the board with his fist. "He is coming here! He will either be my friend and take everything, or be my foe and fight!"

There was silence then, until Grella rested her chin on her hand and looked from Karli to Gunnar. She was a tall girl with a slenderness that was all strength, with hair of tawny gold, and a calm face that seemed to shine when she smiled.

She was smiling at Gunnar. "Yes, the Hound is coming," she said. "I am glad that you came first. For my father and I are in perplexity, and you are wise. You will give us counsel."

"Oh, he's wise—and slow!" Karli broke in with a laugh. "Listen to me, Grella—"

She quieted him with a glance. "Tore wishes to make a marriage feast. He promises to befriend us, to let my father keep his lands, if I will agree."

"She won't agree," Ogmund grated. "Nor I! He's had one wife already, and treated her badly."

Gunnar had opened his mouth to speak. Karli interrupted, jumping up from the bench. "I am the one to marry you!" he cried. "I am the one to befriend you! I have favor with the King, and my comrades are men of importance. Asmund Grankelson! Sigvat the Scald! Finn Arneson, leader of the bodyguard!"

He spoke so loudly that everyone heard: even Ogmund's thralls, on the farther benches.

"I can do nothing now, because I am bound a-voyaging. Ay, Olav is sending me far northward to trade for furs. Gunnar must go also, as pilot; he sailed those seas when I was too young for faring.

"So you must put Tore off, Grella. Soothe him and make excuses. Only wait for me to come from Biarmaland—and I will bring you a bride-gift fit for a princess!"

At last Gunnar could make himself heard, though now he had little to say. "Karli counsels well. I can give no such promises, for I have no royal favor, no mighty friends." . . .

The brothers were back at home, in their palisaded steading on the island, Langoy, when Karli fully explained the business.

"It's a partnership to make great profit. King Olav sends the ship, half the trading wares—they are safe aboard—and half the crew. We are to furnish as much goods and as many men."

Gunnar was willing enough, yet uneasy. "Should we leave the land in such risky times?" he questioned. "I suppose the King should know best. The voyage will be a manly venture, certainly."

They were busy for the next few days. Karli gave orders, strutting in his gilded helm, but Gunnar managed all the preparations. He inspected equipment: iron caps and mail-coats, spears, swords and axes. He provisioned the ship with numerous sacks of meal, casks of ale, cured meat and fish.

He ransacked the garth for trade-goods. Rolls of homespun cloth, copper pots, scrap metal for making arrowheads. Money, too, though this was scarce. The northern heathen coveted silver; he used it for ornament, and for death-offerings.

ON the third day something happened.

A fast shallop slipped into their island haven. Two men beached it and came up to the steading—hardy, hairy carls. "Health!" they shouted. "Health and a message from our chief!"

The message disturbed Gunnar, puzzled both brothers: Tore Hund had learned their plans at Ogmund's garth. He too wished to make the northern voyage, and he asked them to wait at Sandsvaer until he could join them.

The brothers held a consultation. "What means this sudden friendship?" Gunnar worried.

"Grella has put him off," Karli guessed, "as I advised. At least he cannot trouble her if he sails to Biarmaland. He's a grasping sort, and wants good trading."

"Perhaps he blames you for his nephew's death."

"He should blame Asmund Grankelson more!" Karli said.

"Asmund is harder to come at. Yet we can't refuse Tore's company," Gunnar decided. "That would shame us. One thing we can do—bid him bring a ship no greater than ours, and no more men."

The message-bearers went off with their answer. In a day or two more everything was ready for the faring. The brothers manned the sturdy cargo ship and hoisted the wide sail to the wind.

And in spite of Karli's masterful ways, Gunnar commanded. The crew took orders from the older, more seawise captain.

They anchored off Sandsvaer, a well-known fishing-place, and lay waiting for Tore Hund to come from Biarkoy. Before long his sail showed its red and black stripes over the waves; then his black hull thrust up its dragon prow.

He had brought his great longship, with a ship-gang of eighty.

A SKIFF danced across the water, and Tore climbed to the cargo ship's afterdeck. He was unarmed and in stained ship-clothes of wool and leather. His hard face wore a smile.

Gunnar wasn't pleased. "Why have you disregarded our wishes?" he said, pointing to the big war vessel.

Tore smiled more widely. "A man judges for himself," he said reasonably. "That's a seaworthy craft; I have no other as fit for a long voyage. A big ship needs a big crew. And moreover, on such a dangerous journey it's best to have many carls."

True enough. Yet when Tore had gone back to his dragon, Gunnar swore a heathen oath. "By Loki's fire! We will watch the Hound well, and sail as far from him as possible!"

It was more like a chase than a voyage in company. By skillful handling Gunnar managed to keep ahead. When the wind blew strongly, the wide-sailed burden-ship showed its heels. When the wind failed, the many-oared dragon surged up.

They sailed north along Finmark; while the sun burned overhead by day and night, except in cloudy weather. A storm hurled them around North Cape, past the bleak lands of the Lapps and Kyrialers. Sea birds hovered over the straining masts. Seal and walrus swam alongside, just out of spear's reach. Whales spouted. White bears drifted by on ice floes.

Gandvik, the White Sea, was clear of ice when they crossed it. And the spring floods were long over when they finally entered the great northern river, the Dvina.

The ships were together now. They rowed against the brown current, between marshes and banks of raw sand and gravel, backed by a stunted forest, until the shores grew higher, the trees taller. . . .

"Is there news of war?" . . . "The Danes are always threatening!" he called back.

The trading-place was a clearing surrounded by tumbledown booths of logs and stone. Nobody lived there; traders raised a signal-smoke on landing—then the Biarmers came from the woods without fear. There was always a truce at such times. According to old custom, no man could shed blood while bartering.

So it was now. The Norsemen landed unarmed and built their fires, the two crews together. Tore had a good greeting for the brothers, praising their seamanship. He seemed to have no thought but of peaceful trading.

The Biarmers began to troop out of the forest—short, broad-faced men in shaggy skin garments, each with a bulky pack. Their squinting eyes gleamed at the offered wares, and they hurried to spread their furs on the ground—splendid furs of young seal, of white bear and fox, otter and sable, lynx and beaver.

The bargaining went on for days, with shouting and laughter, or sometimes with sharp words, but never with blows. At night the Biarmer chiefs feasted the visitors on salmon and reindeer venison. The forest men clamored for Norse ale; but the Norsemen couldn't stomach their oily drinks.

Suddenly it was over. The trade-goods were all gone, the furs all bought. The Biarmers gathered their new gear and vanished into the forest. The Norsemen loaded their furs and dropped downriver with the tide.

Gunnar was on his foredeck, looking out for the best channel, when he heard the horn braying astern.

"Check way!" he ordered the rowers. "Tore Hund calls us." He had almost forgotten his distrust.

The longship slid alongside, Tore standing high on a bench. "I call a meeting!" he shouted. "A Thing-meeting for hardy men!" He shook an ax in the air to gain attention; and every eye was on him, every ear listening.

He shouted again: "The trading-peace is over. It is lawful to make war! Are you willing to go harrying for treasure?"

Gunnar protested: "We have traded well, and should be satisfied!"

His voice was drowned out. A roar of approval rose from both ships. Even Tormod Big-hand bayed happily, and Karli clamored loudest of all.

Tore looked around at the fiercely eager whiskered faces. "I will lead you to the Biarmers' temple, and the howes where dead chiefs are buried with much silver. The temple itself is floored with silver. Inside it sits the god, who is called Jomale."

The carls clamored again.

"We will go tonight," Tore told them, "each with an empty meal-sack, or a bag made of sailcloth. If you obey me we shall win wealth! We must act quickly when the time comes—take all we can from graves and temple. Only remember! No man shall touch the god, or harm will follow."

When the tumult had died down, Tore turned his scowling glance on Gunnar. "You are outvoiced, chief of Langoy! I think Karli is bolder. You can stay with the ship-guards and let him lead your fellows."

"Karli may be hardier," Gunnar rumbled. "He is also more reckless. I'll go!"

Yes, he would go, he thought. Since his men had chosen, as was the right of freemen, he would lead them. He'd share the danger, but not the booty.

It was the old Viking way, to win wealth with the sword, and Gunnar had been a Viking. Had the new faith softened him? He didn't know. Yet it seemed unfair to rob the folk who had traded honestly.

THE forest was a maze of dark trunks; the year was older now, the nights dusky. Men trod cautiously, their reindeer-leather shoes soft on the pine litter. Branches scraped the shields now and then. Weapons clanked faintly, mail rings jingled.

Tore had passed word to strike bark from the trees, to mark a path. The slashing sounds were loudest in the silence.

The march was not long. Barely an hour ago they had left the river, and already Tore was sniffing for woodsmoke. Gunnar caught the keen scent too—a hearth fire was burning somewhere near.

The three leaders halted. The men came up, massing at the forest edge.

They were looking out on a clearing, lighter than the woods. Gunnar saw haggled, rotted stumps; beyond it, rose the jagged points of a log stockade, a faggot garth. Something moved by the dark wall. Two figures in wolf-head caps, the ears pricked upright. Each wrapped in a shaggy cape, each holding spear and skin shield.

Tore was growling: "They guard the gate by two and two. Soon these will go away to the town—which is yonder, eastward—to rouse the next couple. Then we will get to work; and if we raise no alarm, there will be no bloodshed."

That would be well, Gunnar thought. The Hound was crafty!

Time passed, and at last the watch was up. The two Biarmers moved off across the clearing, seeming more like animals than men in their eared caps and shaggy dress.

Immediately Tore started forward. The whole raiding band swarmed into the clearing.

Tore leaped up with rearing ax, hooked it over the wall. With a heave he swung himself to the jagged top and vaulted down inside. Karli followed, scaling the wall in the same way. Gunnar set his shoulder against the timbered gate, Tormod pushing beside him. The gate shook, then opened with a groaning, grating sound.

Next minute the garth was full of prying, looting men.

The howes rose all around, small mounded hills. The men began to break into them, digging with swords and spiked axes. Bones rolled out, mingled with earth and glimmering metal. The diggers grunted, gasped, called out in low voices:

"Arm-rings and brooches!"

"*Skillings* of silver!"

"A mead-cup as big as my head!"

Tore didn't stop at the graves. He ran on to the temple, a great crooked house of rough logs. Gunnar and Karli were close behind as he went through the yawning door and others jostled after. Then, for a moment, all paused in awe.

A fire smoldered on the central hearth, giving ruddy light. The floor gleamed around it—all of coined money, trodden down with ashes. But a grisly thing loomed beyond—the god Jomale.

The god was a seated image, much larger than a man. His body was hewed of wood, but his head was of green bronze. He had clawed bear-paws for hands, walrus tusks hanging from his mouth, and his eyes glowed red. They seemed to move in the firelight.

Biarmers had carved the body from a huge log. But no Biarmer skill could have fashioned that gaping, glaring head. Except by troll-craft!

"Leave the god alone!" Tore rasped.

They left Jomale glowering grimly while they broke the floor with their weapons, scraping up silver and ashes mixed together. There was money from all the world, some old and rudely stamped. All the coins ever taken in trade were hoarded here!

Gunnar picked up two of the pieces and clinked them in his palm. One was from Miklig-rd—Constantinople—he thought. The other bore the likeness of a King; perhaps Karlomagnus, perhaps Alfred of England. He looked at them and dropped them. He would take nothing.

"Enough!" Tore whispered hoarsely. "It's time to go!"

IT was time; the sacks were almost too heavy to carry. The plunderers shouldered their booty and stumbled out.

They gathered in the outer garth, but Gunnar missed his brother. Had Karli lingered in the temple? Gunnar glanced around hastily and turned back.

Peering into the big firelit room, the first man he saw was Tore Hund. Tore had gone to the god, seized a copper pot that had rested on Jomale's knees. Gunnar saw him pour out the contents—a stream of silver pieces, the newest and brightest of all.

Then Karli came out of the shadows. He had seen Tore rob the forbidden god. He too ran to Jomale, reaching up at a gleam of gold—a golden collar about the idol's neck!

He fumbled and wrenched, but couldn't unclasp the necklet. Cursing, he swung his ax at the bronze head.

The head flew off. It struck the log wall with a loud, ringing sound, like a great bell, and rang again as it rebounded to the floor.

Karli sprang away, laughing, the collar in his hand.

There was surely some magic about that head, and the noise it made! The Biarmers had taken alarm. They were blowing their horns and howling as the Norsemen made for the forest.

Tore urged them on. "I was disobeyed!" he raged. "They'll be after us in hundreds—they gather in their town at this season. On! On!"

The blazed trees made direction plain. The carls pounded toward shore and ships, sweating under their loads, laughing and joking. They were in good spirits.

BEHIND with the rearguard, the leaders were anxious. They were the last into the wood; and looking back, Gunnar saw a dark mass seethe across the clearing—a horde of enemies, shaggy and howling, like a wolf-pack.

They were in the forest now, many and fleet. Their skin-booted feet drummed the ground, their wild voices yelled closer and closer. Their wild eyes could pierce the dusk. And now the dusk was lightening, a dawn wind blowing. It was a strong wind, straight from the west. A good wind!

"I'll teach them a trick!" Tore snarled. He trailed his treasure sack, thrust in his hand and threw ashes into the air. "Do as I do!" he ordered.

The men of the rearguard obeyed. And that was like more troll-craft! The heavy stuff had shaken to the bottom of each bag, leaving the light on top. They pawed their bundles and sowed the wind with ashes. A choking, blinding cloud blew back—back into howling mouths and squinting eyes. There was confusion behind, a slackening of pursuit.

Gunnar was thinking of a worse danger. "The ships!" he panted to his brother. "We'll leave the Hound to his tricks, and see that we are not cut off!"

He ran on, skirting the hurrying column. "Langoymen here!" he shouted. "Follow me!"

Man after man swerved to join him, until he was leading the retreat with his own crew. They burst out of the forest, into marshy flats. But the Biarmers were there already!

A long line of beast-men was quartering from the right—a line of shaggy heathen, their animal-head caps turning them into wolves and bears and lynxes. They had been trotting in dogged silence. Now they raised their yelping war-cry. Some turned on the Norsemen, some went for the stranded ships.

The beast-men raised their yelping war-cry . . . Only Gunnar's few could save the ships.

"Drop your booty!" Gunnar roared. "Make a shield-wall!"

Tore's carls were fighting in the wood. Only Gunnar's few could save the ships. Their shield-wall was small, only ten men to a side—a wedge with Gunnar at the point, Karli at his right, Tormod at his left.

The wedge struck the wild men. Then came the weapon-shock! Stone clubs thumped Gunnar's shield, spears prodded at him, cracking and breaking. He used his sword on a skin-capped head, sent a fur-clad body sprawling—then another and another. Karli's ax was chopping. Tormod's war-hammer made crunching sounds.

Suddenly they were on the strand; they had driven through the Biarmer throng. They turned and stood fast before the ships, while the beast-men worried the wall of shields like wolves at a fold. But there were no sheep! Only an unyielding wall and iron blows, hurling back each rush. The ship-guards began to shoot arrows into the pack. Then Tore Hund's men came storming from the wood.

That ended it. The heathen scattered, howling louder than ever.

GUNNAR'S craft was first to push off. "We'll waste no more time," he said. "The raid was unlucky! Two of the King's men have taken their bane, three of ours are crippled."

"It was worth some blood-letting," Karli crowed.

"Ay, and it may cause more!"

The burden-ship was heading down-river, the longship following a mile astern. Gunnar saw the other crew using both oars and sail, trying to catch up. Prudence told him to keep the lead.

But a tide-rip stopped him, seething between two shoals. He was obliged to anchor until the tide should turn.

The dragon forged up and lay to. Tore Hund rowed his skiff over to the burden-ship. "You are in a hurry, Gunnar!" he hailed as he climbed aboard.

"Summer is passing," Gunnar answered. "The voyage will be long and the weather will grow worse. Also, we must deliver the King's share of our furs."

Tore gave him a dog-toothed grin, meant to be friendly. "I won't delay you. I only wish to ask fair dealing —that Karli give me the golden collar, the collar of Jomale. Surely it should be mine! For I led you to the treasure, I checked the Biarmers in the wood and routed them on the strand. While you, Karli, did nothing but make trouble with your meddling!"

Karli was wearing the shining thing, clipped around his own neck. He fingered it and shook his head. "I took it, Hound," he smiled. "I give it not to you, but as bride-gift to Grella Ogmund's-daughter."

Tore's bony face flushed. His red brows drew into a knot. Without another word he vaulted down to his boat and gripped the oars.

"There goes an angry man," Gunnar said. "Look, the tide is full, the *strom* has slacked. Up anchor!"

Again the smaller ship was first away, chance helping. Tore had gained his ship, barking orders. His

men grabbed the sail-rope, hoisting with all their might; then the rope broke and the great sail fell down across the waist.

Before this accident was righted, the brothers had made some distance.

And now began a chase in grim earnest. Over Gandvik, into the Cold Sea. Back along the lands of Kyrialers, Lapps and Finns. By day and night, through calm and storm. Always the smaller ship fled before the greater.

Sometimes the dragon would almost overhaul the other, racing up with bellying sail and foam under its ugly stem-head. Gunnar would head then across-seas, his higher sides giving an advantage. His men would douse the sail with the leather baling-buckets, and make all weapons ready.

They rounded North Cape and came to Mageroy. A wild island, yet inhabited. It had a haven and a fishing village, the farthest north.

Gunnar decided to put in. The ship was battered, the crew exhausted, the food gone. "If we never came from Biarmaland," he reasoned, "it could be said that the Biarmers slew us. But here are witnesses."

It was a mistake. . . .

They limped in and moored at a jetty of broken stones. The Mageroymen—rude fellows, mostly Finns—sold them smoked fish, filled their empty ale-casks with water. They spliced worn stays, re-stepped the mast.

Next day the dragon swam into the narrow harbor, its sail whitened with brine, its painted shields washed dingy by the waves. It too made fast to the jetty; but farther out, toward the sea.

Gunnar swore by both Old Gods and Christian saints. "Tore has cut us off! This time it won't be easy to give him the slip!"

The dragon's crew busied themselves, making good the wear of weather. After a while their leader landed and came striding along the jetty. He stopped halfway between the ships and shouted a hail.

"Karli! I wish to talk! Let Karli meet me here, alone as I am—if he is not too backward!"

"Don't go," Gunnar advised. He saw that Tore wore no mail, carried only a spear. But it was a slender spear with a polished band, and it pricked his memory. Was it that sharp punisher—the spear that was called Sel's Avenger?

"Certainly I'll meet him!" Karli blustered. "Armed as he is, no more and no less. Am I a niddering?" He caught up a weapon and ran down the landing plank.

GUNNAR watched with foreboding as the two met and talked, the tall lean chief and the yellow-bearded guardsman. At first they conferred calmly, spear-butts grounded. Then they began to argue more and more hotly, gesturing and shaking their weapons.

Suddenly the Hound shortened his spear and thrust. Karli tottered backward. Tore gave a harsh cry, "Thus do you know a Biarkoyman!" He stooped a moment before he turned and ran.

Gunnar jumped to the jetty, half his men rushing behind him. They found Karli lying in a red pool, eyes rolled up and red foam on his beard. He stirred a little, muttering thickly. "The collar! Tore Hund has taken the golden collar!"

After that he lay motionless and senseless.

Tore had reached his dragon by this time. His crew lined the side and raised a jeering yell. Gunnar shook his sword at them. What else could he do? Nothing, except carry his brother back to the ship.

He was in the afterhold, binding Karli's wound, when Tormod Bighand came stooping under the deck. "Give us orders!" the carl begged. "They are coming against us!"

Gunnar stepped into the waist. It was true. The dragon had cast off, its oars were out. In a few minutes the great longship would be alongside, swarming with men.

He bit his bearded lip. "We must fight, outnumbered—or escape to the land."

His men had armed themselves. Some beat shields with weapons; others shouted, "We are ready to die in battle!"

Slowly he shook his head. "Your wives shall not be widows. Your children shall not be orphans."

To abandon ship! It was a wise decision, yet a hard one—and a black humiliation.

They saved what gear they could, each man thinking first of his own booty, the treasure from Biarmaland. Gunnar and Tormod were burdened with Karli, still senseless.

The flight was hot and hurried, and so was the pursuit. Tore had landed with his pack. More dangerous than Biarmer wolves!

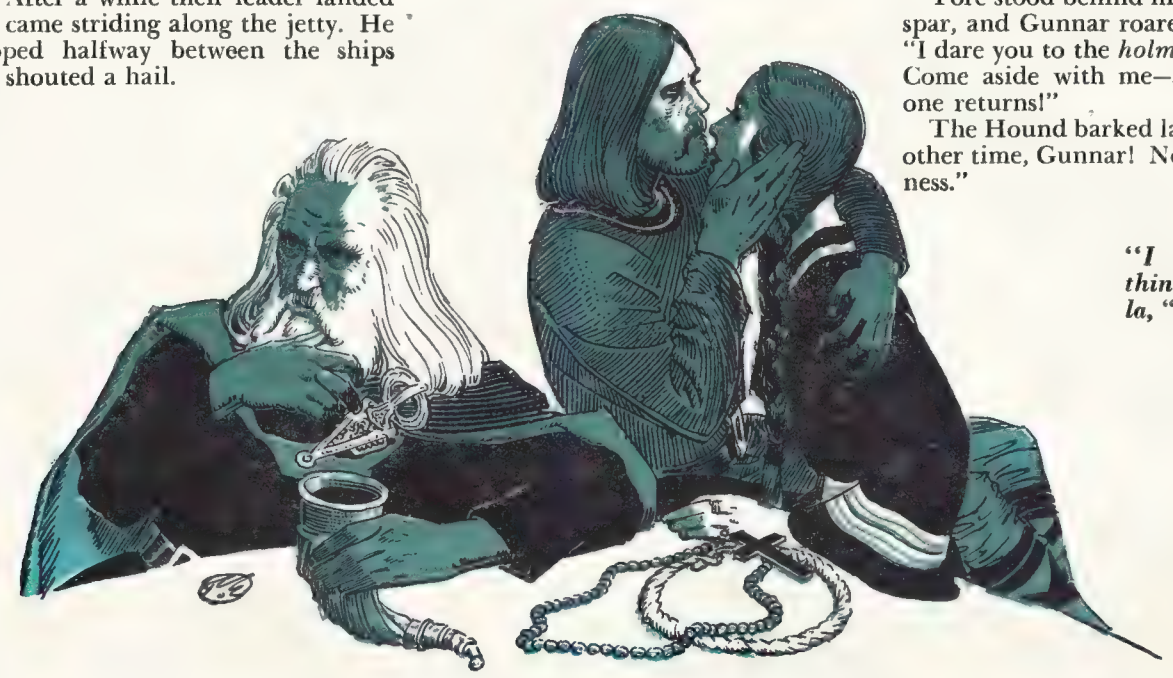
They struggled on, running and climbing. Up through the fishing-town, where shock-haired Finns stared frightened from their huts. Up amid rocks and tangled junipers and willows, until they came to a crevice between frost-shattered cliffs. Into this they stumbled, and turned at bay.

The Biarkoymen were near, the gorge below full of their shields, tarnished iron caps and waving weapons. Too many to attack the narrow cleft. The foremost tried, pushing up in a squeezing crowd.

The Langoymen met them hardily, beat them back and then rolled boulders down the slope. That rocky den was proof against assault.

Tore stood behind his men, tall as a spar, and Gunnar roared a challenge: "I dare you to the *holm-gang*, Hound! Come aside with me—and see which one returns!"

The Hound barked laughter. "Some other time, Gunnar! Now I have business."



"I love better things," said Grella, "—and a better man!"

He called his carls off, and they trooped away.

Gunnar looked down from his stronghold, looked through the gorge and over the village huts. Watched while they robbed the burden-ship of its freight, King's furs and all. Saw them tow the looted craft to deep water, then break holes in its sides and sink it. . . .

A weary crew came home to Langoy. They had beaten downcoast in a crazy fishing-boat bought from the Mageroy folk. Gales had buffeted, cold and hunger had gnawed. A dozen times the overloaded tub had nearly foundered. One of the wounded had died on the way, and Karli was more dead than alive.

Now he would rest in a bed, nursed by the old thrall-wives who were skilled in healing. Perhaps his spent blood would be renewed, his strength restored.

But there was no rest for Gunnar, nor for his weather-bitten crew. The War Arrow had come to Langoy in his absence.

Illustrated by Frederick Chapman

Tore gave a harsh cry, "Thus do you know a Biarkoyman!" He stooped before he turned and ran.

IT was only the fragment of an arrow; part of a shaft that had been cut and each piece sent to a different district. Each was a call to war.

War with the Danes, of course. They were gathering a great fleet to attack Norway.

Gunnar held the bit of painted wood in his hand. He turned to his brother, lying asleep in the wall-bed; then he frowned thoughtfully at Tormod. This was more pressing than his own affair. And yet—

"The northern levies are to meet at Vagar," he said, "where the Weapon Thing will be held."

Tormod clenched his enormous fists. "And Tore Hund? He's a *herse,* a district chief. He must be there."

"Unless he dares to disobey all orders." Gunnar laughed gruffly. "He won't be pleased to meet us!"

There was much to be done, and in haste. Gunnar sent the eight King's-men off in his cutter, to give accounting to their master. A sorry accounting! He summoned every able man on Langoy. He had his own longship, his old fighting craft, hauled from its shed and fitted.

He sailed south with a weapon-gang of sixty. Ready for the Danes, yet thinking more of the Biarkoy chief. . . .

The harbor of Vagar was full of ships, some at anchor, some beached with their grinning stem-heads high on the strand. Many men had landed to make a camp of booths and awnings. They were tending cook-fires, eating and drinking, coming and going busily.

Gunnar eyed the bristle of masts as he steered through the crowded water, picked out each long hull. Ay, the Biarkoy ships were there already! Tore's dragon and two more, almost as big, lying together. He drove his prow on the strand, and went to find the captain of the levy.

Finn Arneson, chief guardsman, had come to command the northern gathering. He was famous for leadership—a straight-backed man with a stern face and a stiff, jutting beard.

He listened to Gunnar, in his tent under the banner. Then he interrupted: "No need to speak further. The eight carls reached Trondheim before I left. I know all about the matter! I also know King Olav's mind, and have his authority."

"I claim the right of *holm-gang,*" Gunnar urged. "Send us to a skerry, Tore and myself alone. Or let the drengs make a ring and put us in it, shield to shield!"

"No!" And Finn shook his head. "There shall be no conflict."

"He deserves his bane," Gunnar rumbled.

"Perhaps. And yet we need his might against the Danes. At such a time as this, when the whole land is endangered, you must not be selfish."

Gunnar had no answer; he clenched teeth and hands, fought down his anger.

Tore had not come ashore as yet, Finn said. But tomorrow all the chiefs would be called to the Weapon Thing, to reckon their fighting strength and receive sailing-orders. The Biarkoy chief would come with the others. . . .

He came, mailed and armed, and wearing a fur cape, as if to muffle his throat from the wind.

Almost the first man he saw was Gunnar. He stopped short, heels plowing the sand, and his dog-teeth showed behind his red mustaches. "So you're alive?" he grinned. "I thought you were lost in that storm, when our ships parted company."

"Or that you had left me to rot on Mageroy," Gunnar rasped. He made no move to draw his sword, though his hand itched. Tore merely nodded and stalked on. . . .

The chiefs had formed a circle, sitting on shields or leaning on spears. Finn Arneson began to speak. There were questions, arguments and discussions; the meeting lasted several hours.

When it was over, Finn beckoned to Gunnar and stepped into the circle. "Stand out, Tore of Biarkoy!" he ordered.

A pause, then Tore came from his place.

Finn eyed him sternly. "The time has come, Hound, when you must answer for wrong-doing."

Tore lifted his head haughtily. "If Gunnar has lost a ship through bad luck or bad seamanship, and blames me, let us both take weapons!"

"No, Tore. This is a matter for judgment, not contention."

"If I have done wrong, I will submit to the King's justice, and no other!"

Finn frowned. "Though it hurt your pride, you must submit to my justice."

The Biarkoy chief glanced around the circle. Every man there had heard of his deeds, and he must have read the knowledge in their faces. He cast a look at the harbor; his three ships were surrounded by a score.

He stood silent, gaunt and glowering, while Finn pronounced judgment.

"For wounding Karli unfairly, you shall pay blood-money—a hundred merks! For robbing the King and sinking his ship, two hundred!"

Tore looked at the ground and muttered, "These are heavy fines."

"Heavier still is the King's displeasure. And one thing more, Tore. You must give up the golden collar."

At that Tore looked up quickly. "What are you saying? A collar? I have nothing of the sort!"

For the first time Gunnar spoke. "Why is your neck swathed, in warm weather?"

The Hound spread out his hands. "If there was a golden collar amongst my booty, it is with the rest—in my garth, on Biarkoy."

Gunnar could hold himself back no longer. He slid out his sword and set the point under Tore's chin.

Holding his head stiffly, Tore raised his hands. Careful not to touch the two-edged blade, he fumbled under his cape, unclasped the hidden necklet and held it out.

A FIERCE temptation blazed in Gunnar's breast, burned through his veins. He had but to make one thrust—had but to straighten his arm! For a long minute he quivered on the brink of action. Then he lowered his sword.

"Take the collar," Finn told him. "Now for the fines."

Tore's face had paled a little. "Do you think I carry so much wealth?" he protested. "I'll have to borrow! Maybe my men can help. They were lucky in Biarmaland."

"Very well!" Finn agreed. "Go and borrow."

The Hound rowed out to his ship. He didn't hurry. Time passed, the sun sank lower; and the circle of chiefs broke up. The beach was not so crowded when at last he came back, with a dozen leather wallets slung on his arm.

He opened them one by one, dumping the contents into Finn's helmet. Silver coins and fragments, part of the temple treasure.

Finn weighed the lot in his hands. "About a hundred merks," he guessed. "The blood-payment comes first." And he poured the silver on Gunnar's shield.

"I must find more for the King," Tore said, scratching his lean jaw. "Well, I must go to my other ships and try again."

"Be quick!" Finn snapped.

But once more the Hound was slow. He boarded first one ship, then another, and moved leisurely amongst the men. Finn waited, fuming. Gunnar gloomily.

Meanwhile the other chiefs had boarded their craft. They had their orders, knew they were to join the King's fleet in Trondheim Fiord. They called to Finn impatiently, telling him to take his place in their lead.

Still he waited stubbornly.

The others began to leave the harbor. Stems were pushed off the beach, anchors lifted. Sail after sail was hoisted, ship after ship headed to sea.

Until Finn suddenly started. "We have delayed too long! Only my ship and yours are left—with Tore's three. We are outnumbered, by his contriving. Things will be awkward if he turns unruly."

"Your own fault," Gunnar growled.

"I'll mend it." And Finn shouted through cupped hands: "You are too slow, Tore! Now we must weigh anchor, and you must pay King Olav when you meet him!"

The Hound heard and answered, leaning on his railing. "Have no fear, Finn Arneson! I pay my debts!"

The two on the strand stood watching while the three sails grew smaller in the distance. "Yet I have a fear," Finn grumbled, "that Tore Hund will cheat us after all."

"I have a greater," Gunnar said. "I fear we may rue the day, and bitterly, when we let him go unscathed."

Yet he could not look forward through the years. Could not see the field of Stiklestad, and King Olav lying dead of a spear wound.

THE autumn wind was blowing keen, and danger of war was over, when Gunnar visited his friends again.

Old Ogmund was cheerful now. "I keep my lands," he chuckled, "since that fellow turned traitor. How he fooled you! With all his wealth concealed on those three ships, he never meant to join our fleet in Trondheim Fiord. Instead, he bore right out to sea and joined our enemies!"

"Perhaps it was as well." Gunnar shrugged. "He carried news of our preparations, so they changed their minds about fighting."

"What a shame to the Danes!" Ogmund laughed. "Only one thing doesn't please me. You were backward in taking revenge for injury."

Gunnar answered quietly. "I could have slain Tore Hund when my sword was at his throat. But all our strength was needed for a greater quarrel."

"Ay!" Ogmund nodded. "You accepted the King's justice, and it did no good. I think that revenge, after the old fashion, would have been more manly."

Sighing, Gunnar turned to the girl. "My brother is impatient with his healing. I come for his sake, Grella, to give you this." And he offered her the collar of Jomale, a bright thing of twisted links.

Grella looked at it curiously, touched it with a slender finger. "I like no gift," she said, "that first belonged to a heathen god."

Gunnar frowned in puzzlement. "Will you not have it?"

She shook her head, her braids gleaming a deeper gold than the collar. "Take it back to Karli. It will pay for many feasts, many fine garments, and those are what he loves. As for me, I love better things—and a better man!"

At first he couldn't understand. He stared at her and whispered huskily, "A better man?"

Grella smiled up at his brown-bearded face. "Take comfort, Gunnar! You got the best of Tore; men say you drove him from the land, so that he lost all power in Norway. And pay no heed to my father. You and I are Christians; we know that justice is more manly than revenge."

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The Mirror

A world of wisdom is packed into this brief detective story.

by ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

"THIS Shoop," Flynn said, "is a man of untidy habits."

"Definitely not neat," I agreed, noting the dust and messy litter on Shoop's desk.

"He's a careless driver," Flynn added, fixing his eye on a particular slip among the desk litter. It was a traffic citation for speeding.

We two had been waiting in Shoop's office for nearly an hour. We were strangers to Redwood City and to each other. My own errand was to inquire about a citrus grove that Shoop had advertised. I'd found the office door open and a janitor washing windows. Shortly afterward Flynn had arrived to ask about some other investment advertised by Shoop. When the janitor went out, we waited there together.

Flynn offered me a cigarette. I accepted and we introduced ourselves. Flynn asked if I knew Shoop, and I said: "Never saw him in my life. All I know about him is what it says on the door—'Nathan Shoop, Real Estate and Insurance.' "

"That goes for me too," Flynn said.

We chatted half an hour, waiting. Shoop didn't come. Finally Flynn remarked: "We never saw Shoop. We don't know whether he's tall, short, fat, thin, dull, sharp, a Republican or a Democrat. But you know, Talbot" —he smiled cryptically—"I've always had an idea you can tell a lot about a man by the room he lives or works in. What I mean is—a man's office is a mirror of his character."

"Maybe you've got something there, Flynn," I conceded.

Possibly there's something of the amateur detective in all of us. Anyway, when Flynn suggested we while away the time by characterizing Shoop from visible exhibits, I agreed readily.

"He's untidy, and a careless driver," were Flynn's first two deductions. "Next, he's an unsuccessful business man. A successful realtor would have something better than this shabby one-room layout, and he'd have a secretary."

I nodded.

"Fourth," Flynn said, scanning the desk litter in detail, "judging by that racing form, he's a gambler. And from several unpaid bills, two of them stamped *'Overdue,'* he might be something of a deadbeat. Your turn, Talbot."

Flynn having exhausted most of the desk evidence, I looked around the walls. "He's well educated," I suggested, nodding toward a framed college diploma. "He's a patriot, if Honorable Discharges from two World Wars mean anything. He has nice literary taste, or he wouldn't have a shelf of the best English classics on his office wall." My eyes strayed back to the desk litter. "He's public-spirited," I said, "judging by that envelope addressed to him as chairman of the local Community Chest drive. And that framed photograph prominently placed on his desk, showing an attractive matron with two small children, indicates he's a devoted husband and father."

"Check," Flynn agreed. "You see I was right? Using Shoop's work-room as a mirror, we see Shoop—or at least ten of his traits."

We waited a little longer and then went out together. On the street we parted, Flynn going one way and I the other. I never saw him again.

On the way to my hotel, I bought a paper. I was reading it in the coffee-shop when a headline hit me. "NATHAN SHOOP MURDERED." He'd been shot dead in a vacant house in the suburbs. Police said the body had just been discovered, but had been there since late yesterday. The murder gun, printless, had been discarded at the crime. No other clews.

It was midafternoon before I realized I had one myself. Hurrying to police headquarters, I found the chief homicide officer, a Captain Boyd. To Boyd I described the hour I had waited with Flynn in Shoop's office. I didn't know Flynn's initials. "He's about fifty, I think, stocky, medium height, double-chinned, blue eyes and rusty hair parted in the middle."

Boyd made notes. "I get your slant, Talbot. The vacant house was property listed with Shoop. If a guy wanted to bump Shoop, he could phone in as a prospective buyer and ask Shoop to meet him there. After the kill, he might worry as to whether Shoop had made a notation on his appointment pad. So he goes to Shoop's office for a look. Say he finds you there. He waits for you to leave, and you don't. So he cooks up this game about doping out a man's character by the litter on his desk. That gives him a chance to look over the litter, and if he sees a notation about his own appointment with Shoop, he can get rid of it."

That idea hadn't occurred to me at all. What actually had brought me here was something which Boyd missed completely. However, I could see he was interested enough to make at least a routine check on Flynn, so I let it go at that. Later he phoned me that a man registered as J. J. Flynn, answering the description I'd given, had checked out of a local hotel at noon and had disappeared. . . .

I hired a pack outfit and packed in to a lake in the High Sierras. After a two-weeks outing there, I returned to Redwood City. Captain Boyd was looking for me. He gave me a hearty thump on the back. "Thanks for the tip, Talbot. We've got Flynn. He's locked up, charged with Shoop's murder."

"How did you find him?"

"He was at a hotel here for a day and night. A man can't stay in a hotel room that long without leaving prints. We sent a print we found there to Washington. Back came a wire that it matched the prints of an ex-soldier named Coy who lives at Eastredge, Vermont. We went to Vermont and found Coy was Flynn. An Eastredge hardware dealer identified the Shoop murder gun as one he'd sold to Coy."

"Motive?" I questioned.

"Grudge motive. It was pretty well covered. We couldn't have turned it up without going to Vermont and digging deep. Years ago Shoop was in business there. He caught Coy in an embezzlement. He told Coy he wouldn't report him if he'd do two things: restore the money to its rightful owners; and stop keeping company with a girl in whom Shoop had no personal interest at the time, except that he was a friend of her family's. Coy, to keep out of jail, had to knuckle on both counts. Later Shoop married the girl and came west. And Coy, ever since, has nursed hate for Shoop."

"He wore it on his sleeve," I said, "when he looked in that mirror."

BOYD gave me a narrow-eyed stare. "What mirror?"

"There's good and bad in every man's life," I said. "But if you hate him, you can concentrate only on the bad. Flynn and I, that morning in the office, saw ten clues to Shoop's character. Five were favorable; five were unfavorable. By the ones Flynn saw, and by the ones he missed, I knew he hated Shoop."

Boyd nodded slowly. "It was as simple as that, huh?"

"When you look in a mirror," I insisted, "what you see isn't the image of another man. It's the image of yourself."

"You big bully!" Gladys cocked her arm back and let me have it.

Wacky

The soul-shaking saga of

I AM not the kind of a guy who holds a grudge. But I can be pushed just so far and turn the other cheek just so long. Then I have to get revenge. Most ethical people will tell you that revenge never does anybody any good. Maybe they are right, but it did me a lot of good, and I will tell you why.

Just before the war I was first engineer on the old *San Rosario.* We were about five hours south of Pedro when the manhole cover beside Number Four hatch clanged back and a head popped into the open. At a glance I could tell that the head belonged to some foreigner. It had big brown eyes and a bushy mass of black hair.

"Hello, señor," said the head. "We are well to sea, *si?*"

"Si," I replied. "Where did you come from?"

"From the cellar of the sheep. I smuggle myself aboard in San Pedro. My name ees Ramon."

"So you're a stowaway," I said. "The skipper won't be happy."

"What you think he say?" grinned Ramon.

I shrugged. The mere thought of what Captain Swendsen would say had my ears crisping already. "Come on," I said. "We might as well get it over with."

Ramon crawled from the manhole. He turned out to be a short guy with broad shoulders and little hands and feet. He wore a ripped shirt, a pair of skimpy dungarees and sneakers with no laces. His face was pretty dirty, but not unhandsome—if you are partial to swarthy characters of the Spanish type.

"I am a student at Princeton University," he said, following me across the deck. "Last month I come to Los Angeles in my new automobile. Some thief steal eet and drive eet off a cliff. Then I am beat up by five tough *hombres* who take my clothes and money. So I have to return to New York. My father ees Mexican consul there, but I don' dare write heem for money because he thinks I am at college. So I stow away."

"Next time try the train," I advised. "You'll like it better."

He rattled on, telling about three girls in Hollywood who wanted to marry him. I gathered he thought he was quite a wolf.

Feeling like an executioner, I took him to the skipper's cabin, explained the situation with a few well-chosen words and ducked out. Captain Swendsen was never in better voice. From where I stood, he sounded like a volcano blowing its top. He began to get madder and madder, and I wondered if it wouldn't have been more humane for me to have quietly dropped Ramon over the ship's rail. I had a feeling he would never emerge from the skipper's cabin in one hunk.

But he did. He stepped out jauntily, nudged me with his elbow and winked. "Ees nice fellow, your captain," he confided. "Much bark weethout the bite. He wants me to present myself to Señor Bosun."

I introduced him to the bosun, who took one look, spat into the ocean and snarled something about stowaways being bad luck. For a week or so Ramon spent his time chipping paint and singing Spanish songs in a liquid baritone. This enraged the skipper, who did not believe that a cheerful heart made willing hands—and for once I was forced to agree. I have watched some slow paint-chippers, but this Ramon copped the trophy.

After dressing him down with the worst language I ever heard, the old man gave him a can of paint, had him lashed to a bosun's chair and hoisted up the foremast. He swung around up there, slopping paint, singing more songs and laughing like a happy hyena. That afternoon he dropped the paint can on the third mate, who hauled him down and kicked him clear into the lamp locker.

He came aft, looking dejected. "I do my best to please," he told me. "I cannot comprehend why these men do not like me. At Yale I am one of the mos' popular students on the campus."

"I thought you said you went to Princeton," I replied.

"Last year, Princeton," he nodded. "This year I go to Yale."

"Don't take it so hard," I said. "Tomorrow we'll reach the Canal, and you can have a time for yourself."

He shook his head gloomily. "I have no money, no clothes. What can I do ashore?"

I felt kind of sorry for him. I took him to my cabin, gave him a worn-out suit of white drill, some old shoes and a clean shirt.

"You are one swell guy," he said gratefully. "I weel not forget you when we reach New York. We weel have a beeg party in my father's penthouse. Girls and champagne—" He glanced with interest into the open drawer of my wall chest. "Ah-h!" he exclaimed. "So beautiful!"

HE was referring to my gold cuff-links. A mandarin had given them to my dad while in the China trade, and I don't believe there is another pair like them in the world. The button of each link is shaped like a dragon's head, with a red ruby set in the mouth and two diamonds shining from the eyes. I kept them in a green plush box, and the lid of the box must have sprung open while I was rummaging through the drawer.

Ramon took out the box and stared at the cuff-links a long time before returning them. "So lovely," he sighed. "Never have I seen anything so exquisite."

"An heirloom," I told him. "Here's a dollar. Go buy yourself a beer when we reach Panama, and don't tell anybody where you got those clothes."

Like a Wolf

by CRAWFORD SULLIVAN

a stowaway who stole his benefactor's best girls.

Early next morning the *San Rosario* started through the Canal. We were certain to dock at Cristobal before dark, and I was looking forward to it, because I had a little gal waiting for me ashore. Her name was Marie Engeldorf, and she sold cigarettes at the commissary stand next to the post office. She was a red-headed trick, no bigger than a minute, with a swift line of gab and an affectionate disposition. I had a standing date with Marie every time the *San Rosario* hit Cristobal, and I knew she'd be expecting me, because she watched the shipping reports.

We tied up at seven-thirty, but the chief engineer kept me aboard nearly an hour beefing about oil consumption. Once I got down the plank, I hot-footed it to the cigarette stand, hoping Marie might be working late. She wasn't there, so I went to the boarding-house where she lived. She wasn't there either. The landlady said she had left ten minutes ago with some other gentleman.

I was burned up, having plunked out five bucks in Los Angeles to buy the doll a charm bracelet. Perhaps I felt more hurt than sore, because this was the first time in any port that a dame had deliberately walked out on me. In those days I was not quite so mature and settled as I am now, and I took considerable pride in my amorous accomplishments.

Well, I meandered over to Dutch's Bar for a drink, and who should I see at one of the tables but Marie. Beside her sat a swarthy individual with macadamized hair, who was exuding charm the way a hippo sweats. It took several seconds for me to realize that Marie's boy friend was none other than Ramon.

Hunching onto the bar, I watched the two, unseen by them. Ramon was lighting her cigarette; then he was patting her hand; then he was gazing into her eyes. What an operator!

After they had polished off two beers, he fished into his pocket and pulled out the dollar bill I had given him. The waiter handed back some change, and they walked arm in arm toward the door. I intercepted them.

"Remember me?" I said scornfully. "I'm Harvey Smith—"

"How did *you* get here?" asked Marie. "I thought you'd changed ships!"

"You knew I was in town. What I can't figure out is how you picked up this—this bum!"

"Careful, señor," warned Ramon. "I cannot allow the eensult in front of the lady!"

I wanted to slug him. "Beat it," I said. "You took my clothes and my money, but I'll be darned if you can take my girl!"

"Eet is up to the lady," said Ramon, bowing. "The señorita weeshes me to scram?"

"No." Marie's lips tightened, and I could tell she was in one of those bad-tempered moods. "Ramon is escorting me this evening. And don't try any rough stuff, sailor."

In two shakes I had Ramon on the floor. First of all I wanted those cuff-links. . . . . I never knew a telephone could be so deadly.

It was evident that tough talk would get me no place, so I tried another tack. "Marie," I said gently. "How can you degrade yourself by going out with a stowaway who has only sixty cents to his name—my sixty cents at that."

"Money isn't everything," she answered. "Ramon comes from a fine family, and he is a graduate of Dartmouth College. I would much rather sit on the beach with a gentleman than get mauled by some uncouth sailor."

"Señor, I am sorry," smiled Ramon. "You can see she prefers me. *Adios.*"

They climbed into one of those rickety old carriages which jog around town, and I noticed that Marie paid the hackman in advance. . . .

The *San Rosario* sailed at ten A.M., and I planted myself on the after hatch at twelve-thirty, waiting for Ramon to emerge from the crew's mess. He came out munching a slab of apple pie and looking his old sloppy self.

"You are mad weeth Ramon for last night?" he chuckled. "Ees fonny coincidence that we both have the same girl friend."

"How did you happen to know Marie?"

"I had the letter of introduction from a friend in L. A.," he said. "Thees friend told me she was one hot nomber—and that was no lie!" He gave a low whistle and leered like an owl.

"Put up your dukes," I ordered, holding my right fist close to his nose.

The grin vanished from his face. "Gentlemen do not fight weeth the fists," he said in a thin voice.

"That rule wouldn't affect you," I said. "Put 'em up!"

His arms dropped to his sides, one hand still clutching the remnant of pie. He stuck out his chin, closed his eyes and said: "I am incapable of fighting weeth the fists. If you desire to strike me, I am at your service, señor."

What could I do? Nothing, except cuss him out a little and then stomp off to my cabin.

After reviewing the whole affair in my mind, I felt sort of sheepish. After all, Ramon had as much right to a date with Marie as I had. Looking at the incident objectively, I decided that I had been a sorehead, completely in the wrong. Anyway, who was Marie? Just a red-headed frill out for a good time. She couldn't hold a candle to Aurora.

There was a sweet kid—Aurora Chavez! She ran a gift-shop in Havana, and the stuff she sold was pure junk, but her shop was worth patronizing just to get a look at Aurora. This Cuban cutie was the ebony and alabaster type, having glorious black hair, pale skin and a figure that made you want to sit up and bark. And Havana was our next port of call.

I knew she'd be expecting me. Aurora watched the shipping reports too, but with her it was a business, for she wanted to get a line on when to expect the tourists.

We tied up in Havana at eight o'clock one morning—a bad time for me, because I had to stay on watch until twelve and see that the wipers cleaned up the engine-room. At one-thirty I reached Aurora's shop and a bell tinkled above the door when I entered. Aurora swished from the back room, more luscious than ever.

"Harvee," she said, "I have been wondering eef you would come."

"You knew I'd be here, baby. Close up the joint, and we'll—"

"Sh-h." She put a finger to her lips. "My grandmother ees veree seek. I could not leave her. At any moment she weel possibly die."

I acted properly perturbed and offered to call a doctor, but she told me that three doctors had already given up the old lady for lost.

We talked in low whispers until a horrible croaking cry emanated from behind the drawn curtains. Aurora went into the back room and returned a few moments later sniffling into a handkerchief.

"Ramon is—what you call it—wacky," she said. "He does not have a brain in his head."

"Poor *abuelita*—" she faltered. "I think eet weel not be long now. You better go."

She kissed me on the cheek, and I left reluctantly. I'd walked nearly a block when I reached into my pocket and found the charm bracelet I had bought for Marie. The thought struck me that a little gift in this time of sorrow might help lift Aurora's spirits.

I went back to the shop and barged in quickly, so the bell above the door wouldn't make too much noise. Aurora was still standing behind the counter—only she was locked in a clinch with an oily-haired guy in a white suit. The guy was Ramon.

I made a harsh noise, and they broke it up. "So that's your sick grandma!" I said. "What big teeth you have, Grandma!"

"Please," Ramon lifted his hand and frowned. "I cannot permit you to make jokes about the señorita."

"Come out from behind that counter."

"You get out!" Aurora's eyes flashed, her fingers bent into claws, and she came at me tigerishly. "Get out, or I weel scream for the police!"

"You had better go," Ramon added. "I think she means beezness."

I knew she meant business, and I knew I wouldn't stand a chance if the cops came, for the Havana police are very partial toward beautiful women. With a look that was intended to signify mingled contempt and scorn, I departed. The little doorbell tinkled cheerfully.

After my anger had subsided, I began to wonder how Ramon had managed to pull the same trick on me twice. Out of all the girls in Havana, how had he met up with Aurora? Maybe it was Fate or the Force of Destiny or whatever they call it. Anyway, it was peculiar.

THE day after we left Havana, I found Ramon sitting on my bunk eating a banana. "Señor Smeeth," he said, tossing the peeling out the porthole, "I weesh to explain that unfortunate occurrence. Aurora ees an old friend of mine. Her father was overseer on my father's plantation."

"You said your father was a Mexican," I reminded him.

"*Si,*" he replied glibly. "But when I was young, we lived in Cuba."

"Look," I said firmly, "you really don't expect me to believe all that guff, do you? I never saw a guy that could switch his stories so fast."

"You—think I would lie?"

"The thought did enter my mind," I told him.

"You shall see. When we reach New York, you shall be a guest at my

father's penthouse, and I weel prove to you the truth." His eyes wandered over to the chest of drawers. "When we reach New York," he continued blandly, "would you consider selling me those gold cuff-leenks?"

"They're not for sale."

"I geeve you a hondred bucks for them."

"They're not for sale—at any price."

"Then, maybe—after you are my guest—you would let me wear them once?" he asked wheedlingly.

"No," I said. "Those cuff-links are irreplaceable. I never wear them myself except on special occasions."

"Okay doke," he sighed. "I am just thinking—when we reach New York, the weather weel be very cold. I have notheeng warm to wear. When we land, I shall freeze." He shivered in anticipation.

I caught the hint. Against my better judgment I said: "There's another old suit in my locker. I'll give it to you when we dock—providing you do some work the rest of the trip."

"You have the beeg heart!" he beamed. "I weel repay you."

WE docked at Greenpoint at last; but I had to stay below because one of the power plants had gone on the fritz, and the chief engineer told me not to go ashore until I had it fixed. I'd barely started to work on the thing when Ramon peered down at me from the ice-machine room.

"When are you going to geeve me the clothes?" he inquired.

"Not till I get this infernal thing working," I muttered.

He watched me bail oil out of the engine with a tin can. "I shall wait for you on deck," he said.

The job took a lot longer than I had figured, which annoyed me greatly because I had a date with Gladys at seven P.M. Gladys was a big blonde who worked on the stage and picked up extra cash as a model. I had sent her a radiogram to expect me.

As soon as the engine was fixed, I went up and looked for Ramon. He wasn't around, so I took a shower. Then it occurred to me that I had better give Gladys a jingle when I got ashore, to make sure she'd received my message. I kept all my phone numbers and addresses in a little book with a brown leather cover, and I kept the book in my top drawer. Upon opening the drawer, I discovered that the book was missing.

Then I remembered. The book had been in the inside pocket of the white suit I gave Ramon!

That explained everything. The names of all my best girls were marked with a star. Upon finding the book, Ramon had deliberately, ungratefully made use of it! I was steaming.

It was lucky for me, I thought, that I had taken the precaution of putting all my clothes and valuables in my locker.

Marie's boy friend was none other than Ramon. What an operator!

I started to open the locker, and the hasp dropped at my feet. The thing had been pried off and then stuck back in place. I swung the door open. Pinned to the cuff of my suit—my old suit—was this note:

I have borrowed the suit you promised me.

I also took some old shoes which did not look very good. I am sorry I cannot make good the invitation to my penthouse, but my father has just been transferred to Guatemala.

Ramon

P.S. I am buying the cuff-links from you, and will send you a check for a hundred dollars as soon as I get it.

By this time I was hopping up and down like a barefooted fire-walker. The green plush box lay in one corner of the locker. My best shoes were missing—also my brand new pin-striped suit which I had not finished paying for.

There was only one chance of my ever seeing Mr. Ramon again. As I recalled, Gladys' name had been marked in my book with a big star.

I hurried over to Manhattan and zipped out to Seventy-second Street. Gladys lived in a fancy apartment-house near Central Park.

The elevator was in use, so I scooted up the stairs. A radio was blurring away in Gladys' apartment; I could hear it way down the hall, playing some kind of a rhumba. I knocked on the door.

"Who's there?" It was Gladys' voice.

"It's me," I replied. "Harvey."

"I'm sorry, Harvey, but I can't go out with you tonight," she called

"Harvey, no!" she exclaimed. "Ramon is my brother!"

through the panel. "I have a terrible headache."

"I'll fix your headache," I said. "Let me in."

"No. I'm not dressed," she said. "Call me tomorrow."

"Let me in or I'll bust that door down," I threatened. "I know who's with you!"

"Go away—you big moose!" I could tell Gladys was angered, because she had lost her cultured accent.

"O.K.," I said firmly. "You asked for it!"

I rammed my shoulder against the door, and on the third try it splintered. As I shoved my way in, Gladys was screaming into the telephone, and Ramon stood in a far corner looking like he wished he was some place else. He had on my pin-striped suit. My cuff-links gleamed and sparkled.

In two shakes I had him on the floor. He yelled, struggled and begged me to stop and reconsider. I dug one knee into his chest and grabbed his right arm. First of all I wanted those cuff-links.

"You big bully!" Gladys yanked the telephone cord out of the wall, cocked her arm back and let me have it.

I never knew a telephone could be so deadly. When I recovered consciousness, I was sandwiched between two gendarmes and well on my way to the clink.

The judge was a kindly old codger who merely fined me twenty bucks and told me to go and sin no more. But revenge was racing through me like poison. I got to be like *Javert* and *Manny the Ax Man* rolled into one. My one ambition was to find Ramon, give him a kick in the teeth and get back those cuff-links.

Then the war came along, and I didn't have much time to look for Ramon any more. After it was over, I quit the sea and got a job with a firm that makes marine engines.

They say that time heals everything, but such was not the case. Whenever I walked down the street, I found myself staring into crowds, hoping to spot a Spanish-type individual with moon-calf eyes and glossy black hair. This habit turned out to be a considerable nuisance when the firm put me in charge of their office at Buenos Aires. The streets in Buenos Aires are full of Spanish-type people, and I was always trailing after some bird who resembled Ramon.

One afternoon I dropped into a café for a glass of beer. The orchestra was playing, and a few customers were dancing around the floor. Suddenly I spied Ramon.

He was decked out in gray flannels, doing his stuff on the dance floor. He had a cute little tomato with him, but I wasn't interested in her. All I wanted were those familiar objects which glittered conspicuously below his sleeves.

I walked up and put one hand on his shoulder. He smiled at first, then looked like a man who has suddenly stepped into a pit of snakes. Without saying a word, he started to run. This was a bad move, because I immediately tripped him to the floor and sat on him. The orchestra stopped playing, and four or five musicians rushed over to pry us apart. They dragged me off of him—but I had the cuff-links clenched in my fist!

Ramon streaked out the door. The men who were holding me waited for him to make a get-away; then they apologized to me profusely. One of them picked a silver cigarette case off the floor and handed it to me, insisting I had dropped it. I remembered hearing something clunk out of Ramon's pocket when he fell.

Thumbing the case open, I found the name, *"Rita Alverez,"* engraved inside, with an address below the name. I went over to Ramon's ex-dancing partner and asked her if she was Rita Alverez. She gave me the snoot, and shook her head haughtily.

Then I got a wonderful inspiration. I was still aching to get even with Ramon, but I wanted to beat him at his own game. He had been slick enough to steal three of my girl friends: now it was my turn to steal one of his.

I was confident that this Rita Alverez was one of his dolls. At any rate, I had her address, and I wanted to find out.

The address took me to an old house in a respectable residential district. I called at eight o'clock, and the door was opened by a hag who looked as if she had been there before Magellan. I asked her if she was Rita Alverez. She shook her head, and invited me in.

I parked myself on a bulgy sofa and waited. In a few minutes a girl entered, and right then and there I knew that I had seen everything.

Compared to this girl, Marie, Aurora and Gladys were like Lena the Hyena. Rita Alverez was the most beautiful dish this side of any place. Her hair was dark, with a mysterious coppery tint, and her skin was pure cream. She had great brown eyes, a gay, fragile mouth and a shape that took your breath away. That satiny white thing she was wearing did not hurt her looks any either.

"Miss Alverez," I fumbled, "I found this cigarette case—and I guess it belongs to you."

I WAS so flustered I forgot to use my high-school Spanish. It made no difference because she replied in English as good as mine, with only a trace of an accent.

"Thank you," she smiled. "Where did you find it?"

"A guy called Ramon had it," I told her. "He got into a fight in a café, and it fell out of his pocket."

"Ah, yes. I gave him the case to carry when he went to the theater last evening. Poor Ramon! He is always getting into some kind of trouble."

"I've known this Ramon for some time," I said. "When I was in New York, he took some valuables from me. I thought perhaps he'd stolen your cigarette case."

"I did not believe Ramon would steal!"

I told her what had happened—leaving out the part about Gladys, of course. She sat beside me and listened with interest.

"It is most surprising," she mused. "Ramon has always been more or less —what you call it—wacky. But I had no idea—"

"He's not to be trusted," I said quickly. "I thought you might appreciate the advice."

"Oh, I do." She pulled a bell-cord. "Will you have some coffee?"

We sat in the parlor talking about this and that until nearly midnight—the crone peering in at us every half-hour. It seems that Rita's father and mother had died some years ago, and the girl lived there with the old duenna and an Indian cook. The Alverez family had once been wealthy but Rita had inherited only the house and a small trust fund.

Before leaving, I made a date to see her the following night; and the upshot was, I had a date with her nearly every night for the next two weeks. I didn't mention Ramon again. It would have been bad strategy—and anyway, Ramon didn't seem so important any more.

RITA and I were holding hands in the parlor one evening, when a knock came on the door, and Ramon breezed in past the duenna. My presence must have been quite a shock to him, for his eyes clicked open and shut like a pair of blinker signals.

"How did thees *hombre* get een here?" he scowled. "Rita—I forbid you to associate weeth heem!"

"I can choose my friends without your advice," she told him crisply.

"You have deceived me!" Ramon shouted. "For the past two weeks I suspected there was someone here you did not weesh me to meet."

Rita was unperturbed. "Now that you know the truth, there is no reason for you to stay longer."

"I weel not go!" retorted Ramon. "Do you know that Señor Smeeth attacked me in public? Do you know that—"

"If you do not leave, I will have Pedro the cook throw you out," said Rita, her eyes sparking.

This was what they call poetic justice. I stood there, gloating inwardly.

"You'd better go," I advised Ramon. "I think she means business."

Ramon turned on all the emotional spigots. He threatened; he pleaded; he wept tears of consternation. Finally he stormed out in a rage.

Rita turned to me, her lips trembling. "You must excuse him," she said. "He is so—irresponsible. He does not have a brain in his head."

I took her in my arms, and I felt as though I had put a nickel in one of those electric shock machines. . . . I tingled all over.

So everything turned out swell. I had made Ramon gulp some of his own medicine, and I was in love. My next move was to pop the question.

We were sitting on that bulgy red sofa when I asked her. It was late afternoon, and the room was filled with a warm half-light. She walked to the window and stared down into the garden. "Yes, Harvey," she said finally. "I would marry you right away, except that—"

"Except what?"

"I am not yet legally of age. Therefore I cannot marry you without my guardian's consent."

"Oh," I smiled. "Is that all? That shouldn't cause any difficulty."

"Eet weel not be as easy as you think, Señor Smeeth!" The side door opened, and in came Ramon.

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

"And I am also her guardian," Ramon added, massaging a mouse which was forming under his left eye.

"Ramon! You have been eavesdropping!" Rita was furious.

"*Si.* I have just been waiting for thees dope to make the proposal—"

"Such patience should be rewarded," I said. Then I popped him right in the eye.

He sat on the floor with a thump. Rita sprang between us. "Harvey, no!" she exclaimed. "Ramon is my brother!"

I was too surprised to say anything. I just stood there glaring at them both.

"And also I am her guardian," Ramon added, massaging the mouse which was forming under his eye.

"When my father was dying, he was afraid I might marry the wrong man," Rita explained. "After putting the money safely in trust, he made Ramon my guardian."

"Why did you keep it a secret?"

"Because I knew you hated Ramon—and I wanted you to love me," she said timidly. "I tried to keep him away from the house each time you called. Ramon is so wild. He has always roamed around, telling people big fish stories—but never have I known him to steal."

"I sent Señor Smeeth a hundred dollars to pay for what I took," Ramon asserted. "The letter with the money was returned to me. I can prove eet."

"That's neither here nor there," I said. "Are you going to let me marry your sister?"

"I think eet over," shrugged Ramon. "First I must make sure you love her."

"How am I supposed to prove it?" I asked.

"By, perhaps, making some leetle sacrifice to show me that Rita means more to you than—" He fixed his good eye on the bottom of my left sleeve.

"No," I said firmly. "I won't do it."

"Okay doke," he said. "Eet is your choice."

"All right," I sighed. "Rita means more to me than anything."

So now I have got this guy Ramon for a brother-in-law, which is not so bad—even though I do have to keep my shirts and ties and socks under lock and key. This is one time that revenge paid off, for it brought me the most wonderful girl this side of heaven.

I only wish somebody would figure out a way for me to get back those cuff-links.

The moon on the one hand
The dawn on the other.
The moon is my sister;
The dawn is my brother.
The moon on the left
And the dawn on the right.
Good-morning, my brother
My sister, good-night.
—Hilaire Belloc

My Sister,

A complete book-length novel . .

I FOUND her just about halfway up Darkwater Cañon Alley, lying against the wire fence under those eucalyptus trees. She had on a fuchsia red sweater and an expensive tweed skirt that was rumpled up high over her knees, and her legs were perfect—nylons and a pair of brogues with big tongues. She had a necklace of those deep brown polished cowries that men like myself bring home from the Pacific; and that silky burnished hair of hers was slid part way across her face. She couldn't have put her lipstick on more than an hour or so; it was deep and quite unsmeared, and the mouth still had a composed half-smile as though she had just drawn four aces. Twenty-two, -three, -four, something like that.

I stopped the car and got out and went over and felt her pulse, though I had a hunch it was no good. I've seen so many in the last few years; there's a feel to them directly you see them, the way they lie, and a feeling you get. Her wrist was still warm, though; she couldn't have been dead more than a few minutes. I must have been the first person to happen along. For a moment I wondered what to do, and I pulled her skirt down properly. I thought of all I had read in ridiculous books that have nothing to do with real life—leave everything alone, and look around for clues and stuff like that; above all don't touch or make extra tracks or marks anywhere. Report at once. Then I looked at her face again, and after a moment I just picked her up as gently as I could and put her in the back of my car.

I did look around for clues too, even after that, but there wasn't anything; and as for tracks, the ground was quite hard and I wasn't the one for that game anyway. Then I got in and drove straight on up the Alley to the junction with Darkwater Cañon Road and turned left down to Chanley Heights again. I had the sedan and nobody took any notice. I had the strangest feeling all the way to the station; I felt that if anyone had stopped me and tried anything, I would have knocked them cold.

I hit the green light in town, so I didn't have to draw up alongside any other automobiles; and when I reached the station, there was a parking spot almost right outside. It was reserved for police cars only, but the other places were too far. Her head had fallen sidewise again, and I put my hand gently against it and straightened it, and her hair tingled against my hand. I could still feel it tingling on my palm as I went up the steps and into the station, and I wondered how long hair stayed with that electricity in it after a girl was dead; and I thought that maybe there was still about a newly dead person like this girl an aura of her soul too, if there was still the electricity. You never can tell.

The desk sergeant was on the telephone as I came in—something about a dog. I leaned on the desk and looked at him—the usual type of desk sergeant that looked as though he might have been sent right over from a studio casting director, he was so typical. He put the phone down with his eyes on mine, and then he wrote something on a pad and rang a bell, and a cop came in. When the cop went with the paper, the desk sergeant looked at me again and said: "Well, Major, what can I do for you?"

I said: "There's a girl in my car. She's dead. You'd better send someone down to take her out, some one responsible."

He looked at me closely.

"You mean a girl just died in your car, Major?"

I never have liked policemen, and I never have liked desks. When you get them both together, you've really got something. I said: "No, I don't mean she just died in my car. She just died in Darkwater Cañon Alley, from a rabbit punch. I found her there ten minutes ago, so I brought her right in. She was still warm when I got her, and no one else had seen her yet."

"You mean you found a stiff and you moved it, eh?"

"Certainly I did. You'd better send—"

"Send a man to get her," he cut in. "Since you know so much of what we should do, Major, perhaps you also know you've broken the law, and even Marines aren't immune from that." He rang a bell. "Why did you move her?" he asked me, while he was waiting for the cop.

"Because I didn't want anyone else to find her. I can tell you just how she was, and where, give you the exact picture."

His eyes were on my ribbons. He said slowly: "You know, Major, a man with your record ought to know better than to act the way you did. You're pretty young for a major, aren't you?"

The cop came in, and the Sergeant said: "The Major here has brought in a dead body he says he found in Darkwater Cañon Alley." He thought of something and turned to me again. "Was it north or south of the fire station?"

"It was south," I said. "About a hundred yards south."

The Sergeant gave a resigned sigh and turned back to the cop again. "I guess that's us, then. Only a hundred yards farther, and it would have been one for West Precinct. It's in his car outside, he says. Go down and get what identification you can." He looked at me again. "Did she have a purse?"

I nodded, and he turned back to the cop again. "Okay, get going, then, and find out what you can without touching her—it's a girl, he says."

The cop looked at me and then he nodded.

"Yeah, you bet it's a girl. If it had been some old trout, he'd never—"

I started for him. My hands were beginning to shake a bit the way they do nowadays after the Pacific. The Sergeant said: "Take it easy, Major." I stopped myself just in time. The cop stood his ground, but he didn't like it. I could have given him around twenty pounds. He waited till I stopped, and then he said, "Okay, Sergeant, I'll get going," and turned on his heel and went.

The Sergeant picked up the telephone and dialed a number. He seemed to have forgotten all about me, but I knew he hadn't. I was all the time trying to figure out how a girl like her could have got herself into a mess like that. I thought to myself it must have been some-

Good-night

by GORDON McDONELL

. . . . *Illustrated by James Ernst*

body back from the war—because of those cowrie shells. Probably the usual story of the girl having changed her mind while he was away. I felt a strange feeling, as though of jealousy, and I couldn't understand that, seeing I never have had too much of an opinion of women since the war started. But she seemed different. She couldn't have been like that. I wondered who the guy was, and again I felt that feeling, directly I thought of him: That any man should have known her that well. After all, you've got to know someone darn' well—to want to kill them.

The Sergeant was talking on the telephone to the receiving station next door, and he told the doctor to come over right away to examine her. He put the phone down and pressed a buzzer, and called in someone named Ives. Then he spoke into his transmitter, calling cars Twelve and Sixty-one to proceed at once to Darkwater Cañon Alley and seal it, and look out for anything pending arrival of the detectives.

Ives came in with another man. They were both plain-clothes men, and I could see I would have to try to keep my hands from shaking while I was with them. I would have to try and not let them make me feel all caged up. Once I get to feeling caged up, then there's always trouble ahead. A lot of people think it's the flying that does it, but it isn't the flying. I've been like that ever since I was a kid, long before I ever put a finger on a plane, long before the war. But it pays to let people think it's the flying, especially people like Ives. If they knew it was just surplus electricity, if they knew it was genuine all-the-year-round stuff, then it makes me out something else. And that's no good, giving them something to pick on. I was thinking about how to control it when they came in, and I was watching Ives' face for clues. The other man was his help—you could see that at once; you could see he wouldn't originate trouble.

The Sergeant sketched it for Ives. Ives listened—was still just listening when the cop came back up the steps

Her wrist was still warm; she couldn't have been dead more than a few minutes.

with her purse. He put it on the desk and said that was all; she had no rings, but she had a shell necklace like sailors *and* Marines bring back from the Pacific, and he looked at me as he said it. Ives picked up the purse and started through it. The cop said it looked like her neck was broken, but the doc was examining her right now and would make his report shortly. Ives listened all the time while he went through the purse. The cop said she sure was not hard to look at, and the Sergeant said that was all thank you, and I dug my hands in my pockets as the cop went out.

Ives was looking at me. He looked for about ten seconds, and the help looked too, and then Ives said, "This way, Major," and the help went ahead along a passage. I followed him with Ives right behind me. They took me into a plain small room with the walls only part way up to the ceiling. There was a bare desk and some chairs. Ives sat down behind the desk and told me to sit opposite while the other man stood in the shadows behind me. Ives zipped up her purse that he was still carrying and put it down.

He said: "What did Letitia mean to you?"

"Is that her name—Letitia?"

"Didn't you know?"

"I never set eyes on her before."

I was thinking—*Letitia,* that's a corny kind of a name for her, disappointing somehow.

Ives said: "Then why didn't you leave her where she was and call the police from the nearest telephone?"

"I should have done that. I just didn't. I've no explanation."

"H'm," Ives said. He tapped a soft little tattoo on the desk with the fingertips of his left hand. "Let me see your identification."

I took out my wallet and handed it to him complete. He took out my driver's license and studied it and checked my eyes and hair.

"What is your name?" he asked me.

"James Quentin Foraker."

"Date of birth."

"October thirtieth, 1915. You needn't worry—it's my wallet, all right."

He looked through my other papers and handed me back the wallet and got up, nodding to the help. "Let's go."

We went out through the front hall. The doctor was standing by the desk talking with the Sergeant, who was on the telephone. The Sergeant was evidently talking to the coroner, who was telling him to call Carson Brothers. The Sergeant handed the telephone back to the doctor, and he said yes, it was a fractured cervical vertebra. He listened some more, then said all right and put the telephone down. He told the Sergeant that it was not really necessary to hold an autopsy as the cause of death was quite obvious, but that as a matter of routine and to make everything aboveboard, it was as well to have Carson Brothers perform one. The Sergeant said okay, he would tell them, and turned to Ives and asked who she was. Ives handed him her purse and told him he was taking me up the Alley right now, and would see him later. The Sergeant said okay, and we went out to Ives' car.

THEY ASKED WHERE MY CAR WAS FIRST, and went to take a look at the girl. She was still sitting in the same position as before, as though nobody had disturbed her. I got that feeling again as I saw her once more, sitting there in my car like that; it was a curious sensation, and I thought of what wonder she would show if she could ever have known that one day she would be sitting in my car.

I turned away and waited for them by their car. I didn't want to be with them while they said anything about her. It wasn't that I expected them to make cracks like that cop, but I just didn't want to be with them while they said anything about her. The ambulance came for her just as they had done looking, and Ives gave the men the go-ahead. The next place she would be going was Carson Brothers. I knew that about her too. Gradually I would know more and more about her, maybe. Ives shot me a quick look as they came up, and then opened the door and nodded. I got in with him in the back while the help drove. I could see that I was in for more questioning, and I was glad it wasn't far to the Alley where I could stretch my legs and get uncaged for a little time. It went through my mind, as Ives began his questions, that I had taken no exercise at all since ten o'clock that morning, and it was now four in the afternoon. I would have to get some more in before sunset, or else there would be trouble in the night, especially if they were going to keep me in some office with Klieg lights. It was clear that my wisest course was to try to answer as politely as possible, and hope they would release me before night.

IVES SAID: "YOU TOLD the Sergeant she died of a rabbit punch. How did you know?"

"In my profession," I said, "one gets to know that kind of thing."

"What are you doing here, Major?"

"I'm on leave."

"When did you arrive, and where from?"

"I arrived a week ago from San Diego, where I docked two weeks ago."

"From the Pacific?"

"Yes."

"Tell me where you're staying, and for how long, and where you are going next?"

"I'm staying with friends at Weston Drive, Chanley Heights. I shall be here another three weeks. Then I go to Quantico, Virginia, where I'm going to be an instructor in combat flying."

"How long is it since your last leave?"

"Just over a year."

"Where is your home?"

"New York."

"Are you married or single?"

"Single."

"Are your parents living?"

"Yes."

"And you're not going home for any of your leave?"

"I shall probably go for a few days before taking up my new appointment."

"Who are these friends of yours here?"

"Captain and Mrs. Marford. He was my best friend in the Marines. He's out now, and back at his studio, where he works as a motion-picture director."

"You don't see very much of him then in the daytime?"

"Of course not."

"But you see Mrs. Marford, no doubt?"

"No doubt. When she isn't busy with the baby, which is most of the time."

"You must have plenty of time on your hands."

"More than I had in the Pacific, for a change."

"Why did you go up Darkwater Cañon Alley just now?"

"I was on my way to the hills to take some exercise. I need a great deal of exercise. I took the Alley because it looked interesting, and I wanted to see where it came out. I did not have the girl with me. I did not murder her in the Alley or anywhere else. I had never seen her before in my life."

We had reached the Alley. A patrol car was standing by. The help stopped to let Ives speak to the cops. I got out and started walking up the Alley. I was getting my hands in a bad state of shakes with all the damfool questions, and I was damned if I would sit in that automobile any longer. I heard the help shout after me, but

I didn't give a damn and kept right on walking. I was interested to see if he would start shooting, but he didn't. He drove the car after me. I still kept right on walking after I heard him right behind me, and he had to slow down to five miles an hour, which was the pace I was walking. I guess he looked kind of stupid, and I began to feel a bit better.

When I got to the place where she had been, I stopped, and he stopped too, and got out and came up to me and started to get tough. But he wasn't too good at it. Ives would have been ten times better. He was good enough for dealing with a civilian, but not for a Marine flyer. I just cut through it, and told him that that was where she was lying when I first saw her.

He was interested at once, besides seeing in it a way of recovering his dignity. He started asking me questions about how she was lying, exactly where, whether I noticed anything else anywhere around, any people, any dogs even, anything at all. I told him just how it had all been. He was good at this kind of thing, quick and smart, and my respect for him grew from the former low. His name was Wilson, and he had been through the mill —you could see that. He had quick brown eyes that took everything in with an all-embracing steady brown stare that yet had a light behind it that saved it from being literal. They weren't as smart as Ives' eyes, but they were all right. Behind the wire fence against which she had been lying was a concrete tennis-court belonging to the house which backed onto it. Although the road was called an Alley and was an alley in the sense that it went past the backs of the houses on Chanley Drive and was used for garbage collection and garden refuse and so on, yet it was really a country lane and a very beautiful one too, while on the other side of it there were green hills and trees and a general well-kept, park-like yet country appearance, something like parts of Connecticut, if you substituted elm for eucalyptus. Wilson took in the whole picture, noting even the empty garbage-cans still lying outside the backs of most of the houses, and asking me if they had been just the same way when I came through. I told him that as far as I could tell, there was no difference.

Ives joined us, and Wilson reported to him what I had told him. Ives said that the whole neighborhood was being canvassed by men he had just assigned, and everything around there was being taken care of, and the sooner they got on to the girl's home, the better. He turned to me and said that I would not be wanted any further at present, but that I was to remain on call, and asked me the number of the Marfords' telephone. I gave it to him and asked him if I could not accompany them. He looked at me a little curiously as he had done several times before, and asked me why I should want to do that. I said that it was simply that I was exceedingly interested in seeing the matter to its conclusion, since I had been in at the start of it. He said that he was unable to let me do this, and would get in touch with me later on. He dropped me off by a patrol car that was going back to the station where I had left my car. Then he and Wilson drove off to the home of Letitia. I did not even know where that might be.

Chapter Two

WHEN I got back to Weston Drive, I found Elsa upstairs bathing the baby. Tom had not come back from the studio yet. The little upstairs nursery smelled of talcum powder, and the room had in its warmth and intimate gayety, with its little frescoed animals on the walls and general cleanliness, the air of being very consciously the kernel of the house. It struck me as I came in that you could see definitely, especially now when it was snugly lighted against the gathering dusk, that the room was the heart of things and knew it and was proud of it, with the baby kicking happily and splashing Elsa's sensitive, sensible face.

In her eyes as she turned to me when I came in there was such a look of deep serenity that it made me feel quieter, but I think she noticed at once that all was not well with Foraker. Elsa was always quick on the uptake. I sat down on the edge of the bed as she went on with the child's tub and asked me if I had had a good hike. I did not wish to trouble Elsa with what had happened; I knew that she would have to be told soon because of the police calling up later on, and perhaps causing anxiety with possible inquiries about me and so forth, but I wanted it to come to her from Tom, and so I said that the hike was fine and asked if Tom was going to be late or not. She said he had just called to say he would be working late tonight. She finished the powdering and pinning and zipping up, and gave him his bottle and turned the lights low, and put a hand on my shoulder and said: "For a man who's been hiking you're still mighty charged up, Foraker. Come, and let's have a Martini."

It was no use trying to conceal things from Elsa; I might have known that. I laughed. "And get charged up some more?" I asked her.

"Maybe you will and maybe you won't," she said, "but you look as if you could do with one, just the same."

OVER THE DRINKS DOWNSTAIRS I told her what had happened. It was not easy to know how to begin. Sitting there in that ordinary, familiar living-room, just down from the putting of a child to bed, with Elsa's common sense permeating everywhere, it did not seem anything other than utterly fantastic, the thing that had just happened. It was no wonder that I was a little tense, trying to start telling her about it. But somehow, drawn out by Elsa's stillness as she sat on a low stool calmly holding her drink, not pressing me with a single question, I told her the whole thing as simply as I could.

She took it with greater composure than I had expected, and yet, looking back on it afterward, I suppose I should have known that she would take it in the way she did. You couldn't faze a woman like Elsa, with her solid New England stock. I've known Elsa for around three years, and that's a lifetime in these days. I met her the same time Tom did, at a dance in San Diego when Tom and I were on a leave together. I remember telling him then that he was hooked, and by the right person too if there could ever be such a thing, and he had laughed and said that coming from me that was the best testimonial any woman could have.

So now, when I had finished and was waiting for her to say something, she got up quietly and started pouring the other half of our Martinis. She handed me my glass and sat down again and smoothed her skirt down over her knees, and then she said: "You know, Foraker, you're really an Elizabethan character. You don't belong in this century, but thank God you are in it. We can do with lots of Elizabethans in this century, I think."

I said: "Just exactly what are you stalling about, Elsa?" But even then I think I knew something of what she meant, because once before, one evening when we were all just a little high in San Diego the night Tom and she had got engaged, she had said something about my being Elizabethan in connection with some stuff she was talking about gallantry.

She said: "You know just what I mean. If you hadn't been you, you'd never have moved the girl at all. Then you wouldn't be in trouble."

"Who said I was in trouble? Ives is much too level-headed a guy to think I'm responsible, or at any rate to come to any unproven conclusions. He'll soon find whoever did it."

"I suppose so," she agreed. "But all the same, it was a corny, romantic act, Foraker, and you're a dope to live as you do."

"You just said you could do with lots of people like me."

"Certainly I can. But you don't do yourself any good by refusing to grow up."

I asked her what she meant, why was moving a girl not being grown up, why wasn't it just a decent normal thing to do, a simple example of respect for the dead. She said that it was all of that, but it was also chivalrous, and chivalry was adolescent. I didn't say anything; I was beginning to get the shakes again, and I realized that I still hadn't taken my exercise. Even Elsa was beginning to coop me up, and that was something that she didn't do as a rule. One of the reasons I can stand being with her is because she doesn't fret at one like most women. But now she was starting to fret at me, and I didn't like it. I finished my drink as quickly as I decently could, but even so I couldn't get out of the room before she had really started something. She said: "Foraker, why won't you try to tell me what's the matter? You know I don't make a habit of butting in, but it's high time I did for once. Is it something about not going home, dear?"

I said: "What do you mean, not going home?"

She gave me a quick glance.

"Tom told me," she said after a moment, "why you didn't care to go home."

I put down my empty glass and got up. I said: "Tom had no business—"

She interrupted me as I was on my way to the door; she put a hand on my arm and got right in my path and looked up at me with that sane frankness of hers and said: "Now, listen, Foraker dear, I simply will not permit this. You're going to sit right down again and behave yourself. Damn it all, you're so busy with your own feelings you haven't given a thought to mine."

I stared at her. "What do you mean?" I asked her. "Just how do your feelings come into it?"

She shrugged.

"Well, it doesn't do my inferiority complex any good to be unable to help you, does it?"

Somehow with Elsa she always would find a way to break the tension in me, even if only for a little while. I could not help a smile, and sat down again beside her on the sofa and said: "Actually, it's nothing serious, my not going home you know, Elsa. It's simply, as I told Tom, that Mother is always trying to marry me off every time I come back, and I never can put a foot in the house without finding some babe who has been sicked onto me with strictly honorable intentions. I know why Mum does it; she's always hated my flying; she's always wanted me to settle down; but she just doesn't seem to realize that it would be much smarter on her part to let me pick my own wife. The way she behaves has the reverse effect, and makes me want to stay single the rest of my life."

"I see," Elsa said slowly; "you mean you want to get married?"

"Why not? It's quite normal, isn't it?"

"Quite. But," she went on calmly, "it just doesn't happen to be true in your case, I don't believe."

I didn't know what to say for a moment. I couldn't see this attack; I didn't like it. I said: "That's good, Elsa. That's the first time I've been told that. Everyone else has always said I want to stay single."

She nodded. "I know," she said. "I know that perfectly well, and you've always said in rebuttal that you want to get married, but that you can't find the right girl, I'll bet."

"That's just it. They are thrust upon me. Maybe they might be the right ones if I found them for myself."

She smiled a little.

"Foraker, you're not trying to tell me that you never can find a girl, are you?"

"Oh, I know, sure I find plenty of girls; but they aren't the ones to marry, the ones a man can just pick up while on leave."

"It's been done," she said. She got up and walked over to the window. Outside, the moonlight was already beginning, and you could see the palm trees over on the next street. She drew the curtains across the window and came back to the little settee by the fire. She said: "You know, baby, you're just frightened of responsibility: that's what's wrong with you. So you'll invent any excuse not to get hooked."

I don't know why she said that, what it was that brought such a statement from her. It almost looked as though she was deliberately trying to get me all charged up again worse than ever. I said, "It looks to me as though you've decided to try the great modern panacea and use me as a psychological guinea pig. Why don't you have me lie down on the couch and you sit at my head and take notes? Certainly I'm normally afraid of added responsibilities, but they're not the reason I haven't married. I just don't happen to have fallen in love, that's all. The simplest reason is often the true one, you know."

It was at that point in our conversation that it happened, the odd sensation came over me; I felt it coming over me as I was speaking those last words, the corniest, oldest sensation in the world that you get first when you're a kid caught at the jam or telling a lie. . . . Or telling a lie.

It was those last words of mine that gave it to me, *"I just don't happen to have fallen in love,"* and they kept on going through my head, the sound of them, nagging at me and kind of jeering at me, and I felt that Elsa was looking at me in a similar kind of way, and I got the feeling of being all charged up again, and I got up to my feet once again as Elsa was saying, "Okay, honey, so you've never fallen in love."

I said, "Just what do you mean, Elsa?" and I could see she heard the tension in my voice, because her face went a bit white. But then she set her jaw in that defiant way she had when she knew that there was something she ought to do, something that was unpleasant and hurtful but had to be done, like firing a maid or cutting out a thorn or having to wait for Tom, and she said: "I've already told you what I meant. I said you'll invent any excuse not to get hooked; and now, this afternoon, you've just invented the best excuse of the lot. It's so good, Foraker, that it's unbeatable, because in this particular case there's not the remotest chance of getting hooked, is there?"

At this, I walked out of the house—walked right past her and out of the house. I walked up the street; I walked on and on and on up the street; and then when I got to the boulevard, I caught a taxi that was going by empty. I told the driver to go up in the hills; he asked me where in the hills and I said I didn't give a damn just as long as it was up, high up, where there was room to breathe. He looked at my uniform and shrugged and said: "Anything you say, Major."

I don't know just where he did go now, I simply didn't notice the directions he took, but when we were way up somewhere I stopped him at the foot of a firebreak and gave him his fare. There was plenty of moonlight to see by, and the track led away up to the very top, and I went up and up, climbing steadily all the time until the lights in the valley spread below me on one side and the lights from the coastal plain became visible on the other, and when I was at the top I could see the whole of the hub of the western world spread out before me, and I thought to myself that down there, somewhere among those lights, anonymous and discreet, was the killer of Letitia.

Chapter Three

I WAS determined to find him. As I stood there on the top of the hill, I wondered to myself why I was determined to find him, what it could possibly matter to me who killed that girl, a girl whom I had never met. I walked around to keep warm, for there was a strong night breeze blowing from the big mountains on the far side of the inland valley, and I did not have my leather flight-jacket with me as I should have done. I walked around and around the tower looking again and again at the views upon all sides, the myriad lights, and the sharp contours of the treeless California hills, and, far off, the emptiness beyond the lights which I knew to be the ocean. Owing to the inland breeze there was no coastal fog, and you could see right as far as the ocean's rim where the lights of the cities ceased along the beaches.

I began to feel a calming of my blood, that same balm of spirit that can come from flight. Although still chained to the ground at least I was high up, looking over part of its expanse. I began to feel able to rationalize my feelings and to think coherently about the things which Elsa had said. What she had said about my wishing to evade responsibility of marriage might be true. It might be. But if it were true, then according to what little I had gathered about psychology, there must be somewhere tucked away in my past the key to the reason for my fearing responsibility. But the trouble with those things was that they were always too pat, too oversimplified, as though you could account for man's life by his impression of one incident in his childhood. Too much importance could easily be placed upon that one incident, and too little upon the kind of physical person that he is. Surely the physical chemistry of a person is the key to that person's mental and spiritual processes; surely people do not take this enough into account when so glibly talking about psychology. At any rate the physical and psychological sides must be reciprocal, and a lot of people, like Elsa in this case, don't seem to take that into account. Elsa had no business to take liberties with me like that. I should have taken her up on it instead of bounding out of the house like a child.

I should have told her that it had not seemed to occur to her that a person with an abnormal amount of physical energy had to lead a very different kind of life from most, that to inflict my scatty form of living upon a girl was not fair to the average kind of girl, that it was not at all easy to find the girl who would or could stand for a man who would be continually off on different forms of adventure necessary to his physical well-being. If I suddenly wanted to breeze off in the middle of the night on a hike or a boat or a few hours' night flying, then there was no more reason why she should expect me not to than for me to expect her to come with me. A fine marriage that would be, a coming and a going all the time. Better to stay single than to contract the wrong kind of marriage. If that was showing lack of responsibility, Elsa had her words the wrong way round. The truth was that I had more than an average sense of responsibility, or I would obviously have been married—and divorced, perhaps—long ago.

The night wind was getting colder, but still I did not leave the hilltop vantage point. Something kept me gazing at the lights below, gazing out at the night and the sea of the night sky. There was a distinct glow in the sky over the cities, but farther off over the big mountains it was darker and more natural, lit only by the light of the moon and stars. As I looked at this piece of the sky that was clearer and unimpeded by man, I saw against it in my mind's eye, as it were in ghostly and enormous silhouette, the image of Letitia's face; I saw every line and contour of that face, so well had I memorized it that

It was Letitia, the girl I had picked up dead.

afternoon; and it seemed as though I had known her all my life; it seemed as though I knew just exactly how she would speak and how she would move about, and for a brief instant just then as I looked up into that night sky, I even knew the sound of her laughter in my ears. Only the color of her eyes was wanting to me; I could not see the color of her eyes, for her eyes were closed, and she seemed to me to be laughing in her sleep.

Soon the vision faded and I turned away, walking down the hill again toward the firebreak. And all the way as I walked down the firebreak to the road, and all the way along the road on my way back to a more crowded place where I could get a ride, all the way I could feel a lightness in my spirit which was strangely combined with a feeling of much sorrow.

WHEN I RETURNED TO ELSA it was late, and I found her reading quietly alone in the living-room. She looked up to me as I came in, and examined my face in her knowing way. I said that I was sorry for having walked out on her when she was alone. She said that my dinner was ready for me, and came to sit with me while I ate. She had kept everything prepared for me as though she had known that I would return. I looked across the table at her as she sat so still in the candlelight and I said: "You know Elsa, I truly did fall in love this afternoon. I don't profess to understand, but—it's there."

She put her hand over the table between us and touched my arm.

"It's happened before," she said. "I've heard of it happening—I don't just mean in classical literature either; I've read of it in modern life."

"I never did, but then I don't read. How does it turn out?"

She said: "Well, it can be rough. But that depends on the person, Foraker. Maybe with you—" She let her words fall to a little silence.

"Maybe."

I was thinking that there was little to expect, and I think she was thinking it too, because she had had sense

enough not to just shrug it off. She got up and busied herself with pouring me some coffee from the little percolator on the side table.

"There's been some telephoning while you were out," she said. "First, Ives called to speak to Tom, so I gave him the studio number. He asked me if you were staying here, so I said you were. Then Tom called just now to say Ives had been to see him."

"I expect he was checking up on me."

"Yes. Poor Tom seemed a bit upset. It seems he knew her—"

"He knew her?"

"She used to play bit parts for him sometimes."

I thought to myself what a strange thing it was that Tom had known her. It seemed strange also to think of Letitia as having acted; I had somehow never pictured that. She had looked to be very much superior to that kind of thing. I've never had much time for actresses, at least not for motion-picture actresses. But Tom wouldn't have known her except professionally; he would only have known her very slightly as a director, probably knew nothing about her personal life at all. For that I would have to go elsewhere, I felt sure.

"Did he say anything else about her?" I asked Elsa.

"No," she said. "He said he wanted to talk to you, and I told him you were out. He seemed worried, because you'd told Ives you would be on call, and I got the idea that Ives is wanting to see you again. I told Tom I knew you would be back shortly, and he said he would be too."

I wondered what was worrying Tom, but I didn't think too much about it: Tom was like that always—even when he was my wing-man, the war-time Tom, he was always worrying about his instruments, which was partly the reason why he was such a brilliant flyer. But when he came in, I saw at once that something must be pretty wrong.

I suppose I know Tom better than anyone else does except perhaps for Elsa; and even there I've certainly known him longer and under circumstances of danger and stress that she would never have seen him in; and directly he came through the door, I could sense there was something—there was a certain way he had with his shoulders—I can't ever describe it but I know it so well. And too, he couldn't disguise his relief at seeing me there. I couldn't understand it, and asked him what Ives had said.

He said: "He wants to see you in about a half-hour." He turned to Elsa and said, "Would you mind?" and she looked a little surprised, but left the room at once. Tom waited till she had closed the door behind her, and then he said: "Tell me something, Foraker: had you ever met Letitia before?"

I was beginning to get impatient; there have often been times when old Tom would make me feel a bit impatient with him, and this was certainly one of them. I said: "Of course not, Tom. What exactly has got into you this time?"

He looked at me, still bewildered.

"But then why on earth did you move her when you found her?"

THAT WAS SOMETHING I wasn't going to go into with Tom. And I felt let down too, if that was all he had been worrying about—I mean when I say let down, I felt annoyed at his making so much of it all. I said: "I moved her because I felt like moving her, I guess. You know me; I never do the orthodox thing. It's in character, isn't it, you dope?"

He nodded in a reluctant yet pleased way and said: "Yes, that fits the Foraker mercury, all right. I must say I'm mighty glad to hear it too, because I've had a bad hour with Ives, I can tell you."

I said: "I wish to high heaven you would tell me."

He took his pipe out of his pocket and sat down and said: "Take it easy, Foraker; you don't have to go for twenty minutes, and this will take all of that."

I sat down and tried waiting—I knew it was the only thing I could do anyway. Tom always had to start everything at the beginning, he had such a deep sense of chronology, or else a sheer inability to hit the highlights and leave the rest go, that he always used to annoy us over his flight reports—I mean his unofficial flight reports. When you asked Tom what had happened after something he had been on, when he would come back with those things in his plane which meant he should not have returned at all, he would climb out and start right in: "When we took off, it was, as you may recall, clear, with cloud at three thousand at ninety degrees. We proceeded for thirty-five minutes on a two-seventy degree course at three hundred speed, during which time nothing occurred, and I had time to—" And then he'd not only go into all that he did with his instruments, but all that he thought and felt about this and that, both personal things and otherwise.

I BELIEVE HE HAD TO GO through this routine, or he would have been quite unable to recapture the things which did matter later on. You would have thought that a man like that would never make a good fighter pilot; yet he certainly was, and one of the best. I think that the same process could be speeded up in his brain to an infinite degree, so that he never lost the continuity of combat for a fraction of a second; whereas with most people it was more a matter of intuition. Perhaps that was also why Tom was a good motion-picture director, because he would think the picture right through, frame by frame, in perfect continuity.

Anyway, that was what he did now: he told me the story of his acquaintanceship with Letitia just like that, frame by frame, as it were.

He started on the day he first met her, how he had been passing on some bit players, and she was one of them, and he had just spoken a couple of words with her, how her work was at first a little awkward, how she had improved fast, not needing to be told anything more than once, as though it came naturally to her, which he had found such a pleasant relief after so many trying tussles he had had in the past with stupid bit players—and not only bit players at that, he took time out to assure me. Letitia had somehow impressed him, almost without his realizing it, to the extent that in nearly every one of his pictures after that first one about a couple of years ago, he had found himself automatically looking for a bit part for her when reading through the script before casting it.

And so she had played her little parts in each of his pictures. Not, he assured me, because of anything personal—I knew, he said, his feelings for Elsa, and how he was a perfectly contented married man; and neither because he built parts in especially for her, but simply because she was competent and had a catholic quality which enabled her to fit varying types of rôles, so that whatever the story, there was in every case a part for her, however small.

During all this time he had never spoken to her except in his professional capacity when directing her, until on one occasion he had approached her during an intermission and had a short talk with her about her work in general, which by then had quite impressed him, and he had suggested to her that she might try to be tested for a quite big rôle in a picture about to be made at another studio, in a part which he considered would suit her admirably. She had told him then that she did not wish to do this, because she had no ambition to step higher; she had no need of it financially, and all that she wanted was to play occasional bit parts just as she had been doing up till then.

The idea of someone working for him as a hobby had somewhat annoyed him, he admitted quite frankly, and for a while his interest in the girl had gone; but then later on, he had found himself watching her at work and wondering why it was that she should be motivated to do it at all, if she neither needed the money nor wished to progress. It occurred to him that there had always been something strange about her, the way in which she always dwelt within herself, and now that he thought about it thus, it did indeed seem almost as though there were something in her soul of inner tragedy, that she might perhaps be doing her acting so that it in turn would act upon her as an anodyne for whatever might be troubling her.

Finding himself embarked upon such romantic speculation, he had promptly taken himself in hand and dismissed the matter from his mind as being over-fanciful. But then, not long after he had done this, he discovered a new development which made him believe that perhaps his notion had not been so fanciful after all. For it was about then that her sense of tragedy deepened and became almost obvious, confirming what he had previously supposed; but now, instead of driving her to sink herself more than ever into her work, she must evidently have reached some form of spiritual limit, for her work began to be adversely affected until it soon became so bad that he knew she would have to be replaced.

He was conscious of the fact that he disliked very much the idea of letting her go without a word, as is so often done in such cases, for not only was he fond of the girl, but he also felt sorry for her, and by now he felt quite convinced that there was some tragedy lying behind the whole thing which was causing her life to go wrong. However, he would probably have done nothing more about the matter and let her go in the usual way had it not been for the fact that on that last evening, which was less than a week ago, he had been driving out of the studio gates and had passed her as she was also on her way out.

He decided on the spur of the moment he would offer her a lift and use the opportunity to do whatever he could to help her. He stopped the car and asked her if she would care for a ride home. She accepted politely, and it turned out that she too lived in Chanley Heights, at an address as good as his own, if not better. It seemed that she used to have an apartment in a fashionable building, but that then the building had changed hands, and by some form of trickery the new owner had dispossessed her to occupy the flat himself, and for the past few weeks Letitia had been staying with her family while looking around for another apartment.

AFTER SHE HAD TOLD HIM of her housing trouble, and the ice had thus to a certain extent been broken, Tom said that he was then emboldened to ask her straight out what was the matter, saying that it had been quite obvious to him that she was under a great strain, and that he felt very badly about the way her work had been affected.

And then, quite unexpectedly, he had found, upon getting no answer from her that she was in tears, was sitting there crying silently to herself in the corner.

For a moment he had wondered what to do next, and then he had decided to stop the car at a convenient place under the trees alongside the avenue and wait for her to speak. He did this, and she made no comment upon his stopping; she was trying her best, he could see, to cease the flow of those silent tears. After a while she succeeded in doing this, and began to speak.

She told him that she was at one of those crises in the life of a human being when no one except that being can decide their fate, one of those supreme and fortunately rare moments in a lifetime when the oneness and the aloneness of a human is brought sharply home. Those, Tom said, were of course not her exact words, which he himself was unable to remember precisely, but that was their purport, and he had recognized at once that he was in the presence of something which was too big for him.

However, when she continued, and said that in order to solve her tangled web she had decided to marry a man whom she did not love, and that it was the imminence of this marriage which was causing the extra strain, then at that point, he had, as he put it, waded in, and he had begged her not to go through with such a marriage, adding that, whatever her problem might be, such a step not only was not a solution but could only make matters far worse than ever before.

At first she demurred strongly against refusing to go through with her plan; she said that she had promised and that she could not go back on her word, that if she did, the man would take it very hard indeed, for he was very much in love with her, although they had only known each other for about a week.

At that Tom had said that she had no business to think along those lines, to weigh her life's happiness in the scale against a man's week-old love affair, something which could not constitute a life's happiness, for, as he put it, even a woman could get over a week-old love affair, and a man most certainly could.

LETITIA SAID AT LENGTH that it was impossible for her to come to a decision that night, but she would sleep on the whole matter and then decide what she would do. She had then thanked him very much for his kindness and sympathy, which she said had been of great value to her in her time of trouble. She was by now quite calm again, and seeing she had regained her composure, Tom had then driven her to her family's house, and that was the last he had ever seen of her. That was three nights ago, and in the intervening time between that and the shocking news of her death, he had often wondered what decision she had come to. He had always had a feeling which she had left with him as one of his parting impressions from her that she would in the end follow his advice, and now with the news of her death, he felt convinced that she had done just that and been murdered for it; and this was why he had been so upset, coming on top of the added shock of finding that I, his house guest, had brought Letitia in.

He had of course told Ives the whole story, and Ives had quite naturally questioned him very closely about me, asking whether he had introduced Letitia to me and so on; and the facts that she had only met the man at about the same time that I had arrived in town, and that he had given her a necklace such as a Marine like myself might well give to a girl, had all very naturally served to increase Ives' questions, for it had to be admitted that the coincidence of it all was very strong. Ives, in fact, had been quite skeptical of Tom's saying he had not introduced me to her, and the only reason he had not sent for me right away was that first he wished to check up with Letitia's family to try to find out what had been her problem. You could not, he finished, really blame Ives for feeling like that about me, especially in view of my having picked the girl up.

As Tom finished talking, I could see by the way he spoke and the little shake of his head, that he was still worried about me and the pickle I was in by my own folly, but I was not interested in Tom's feelings just then. I was thinking to myself over all that he had told me about Letitia; I was seeing that scene in the car under the trees alongside the darkening avenue, and I was thinking to myself that it was a strange fate that the gods dealt out in their cards, that it should have been Tom who had been sitting there and comforting Letitia, and that it should not have been me.

I was thinking these things to myself as I got up from the chair and walked across the room to the door and thanked Tom for telling me his story, and told him not to worry about me with Ives, that my safety was not really in the least at stake, that he must not blame himself over Letitia because he had done the right thing. He had said to her just the words that I would have said to her myself if I had been there with her that evening instead of him.

I told Tom good night, and said that it might be quite late when I returned from seeing Ives, and I thought to myself, as I closed the door behind me and left the house, that I had very many things to find out from Ives, and that it would take a great portion of the night.

Chapter Four

IVES was not there when I reached the station, but Wilson arrived shortly after I did. He looked at me in his straight-face way and said: "Glad you're here, Major. Let's go, shall we?"

"Go where?"

He just gave a little nod as though I'd told him the time or something. He had already started out the door, and I had to follow him. When we were in the car, he said: "Lieutenant Ives is waiting for us at the house."

I said, "Have you found out much yet?"

He looked at me, and back at the road again.

"Quite a bit, Major, quite a bit."

I didn't care for his tone very much, but I ignored it.

"Did you find out why she was going to marry that fellow?"

He looked at me again.

"So you knew about that too, did you?"

"Captain Marford told me."

"Captain Marford told you."

I said: "What are you getting at, Wilson?"

He swung the car off the boulevard up one of the Chanley Heights avenues, I couldn't see which one. He said: "I mean you're very interested in a girl you never saw before; that's what I mean."

I saw it was no use talking to Wilson any more, so I quit. Evidently I was still under a cloud, or a new cloud had just come up. I had a hunch that I wouldn't be long finding out what it was all about, and my hunch proved right. Wilson stopped the car outside one of the houses on the avenue, and we went in. Wilson rang the front door bell, and after a moment a maid came and opened the door. Wilson didn't say anything; he just walked in, the maid stepped aside and I followed Wilson. He walked down a short entrance hall and turned in to a big living-room.

Ives was sitting at the other end of the big room. He was sitting with a girl. The girl was wearing a black dress. I didn't look at her face until I got close, because I was looking at Ives' face to try to get a clue, but it was more poker-face than Wilson's could ever achieve, so when I got close I looked at the girl's face, and I stopped dead in my tracks and my heart turned right over. It was she.

"Letitia!" I said.

It was Letitia; there couldn't be any doubt about it. It was the girl I had picked up dead. I felt my hands beginning to shake a little, and clenched my fists. Ives had turned and was looking at her in silent inquiry, and she shook her head but without taking her eyes off me.

"I don't think so," she said to Ives. "I'm pretty sure that wasn't the voice."

Ives said: "Tell him the exact words you heard. Major, you repeat what she says."

There was a pause. Her eyes were on mine, and my eyes were on hers. They were blue, they were deep, deep blue. I was thinking to myself she was dead, there hadn't been any doubt, so it couldn't be she. There was only one answer; there couldn't be two girls like that unless they were twins; there couldn't be two Letitias in the world unless she had a twin sister; it must be her twin sister; that's what it must be.

Ives' voice came over my thoughts.

"Tell him the words you heard," he repeated.

She was still looking at me, and her face was very white and she had been crying. I waited for the words, and I thought: "It hit you hard, twin sister; it certainly hit you hard."

The words came. The words came very low, but they were clear. They were clear and like bells; each word was like a low clear bell.

"Good night for now, darling," she said.

I repeated the words after her; I kept my voice steady and repeated them, and we were still looking at each other.

"Good night for now, darling," I said.

After a moment her eyes dropped from mine, and I could see a faint tinge of color come over her cheeks. She turned to Ives and said in a very definite voice: "No, that wasn't it at all. The one I heard had a higher voice."

"You're sure?" Ives asked her. "Just what was the difference?" He seemed a little disappointed from his words, but you couldn't tell from his manner; you never could tell from his manner.

She was still not looking at me; she was still looking at Ives as she answered him, but the color was still in her cheeks.

She said: "The voice I heard had just about an average pitch for a man. This one is unusually deep; it isn't one you would forget."

Ives grunted noncommittally. He got up and said: "That settles that." But he hadn't done with me yet. He turned to me and took the necklace out of his pocket, and was about to continue questioning me when the door opened and a man came into the room. He was young, around thirty, blond and well-built, and he just missed being too handsome. He still had his top coat and hat on as he came in, and when he caught sight of her, he threw his hat in a corner and crossed the room to her without a look at anyone else, and then she was in his arms and he was stroking her head and saying: "Janet, baby, I came as soon as I could." It was then that I noticed the wedding ring on her hand.

Ives was looking at his watch and saying: "Ninety minutes from Santa Barbara is pretty fast going, Mr. Holbrook."

JANET RAISED HER HEAD from his shoulder—she was nearly crying again now—and looked at Ives and said: "Begg, this is Lieutenant Ives and Sergeant Wilson from Homicide."

He nodded to them and told Ives: "Montecito—it's a shade closer and that helps." He looked inquiringly at me, and she said: "This is the gentleman who found—" Her voice broke a little, and she couldn't go on.

I said, "My name's Foraker," in automatic fashion, maybe trying to help her out, but I don't think he heard; he had already started to comfort her again; he was saying to her: "I know, baby, I know. . . . Maybe you'd like to go lie down awhile. I'm sure these gentlemen wouldn't mind—" He turned to Ives inquiringly, but she said in a surprisingly firm voice before Ives could speak: "I'd rather stay. I don't think I could ever rest again till we've found who did that to Letty."

There was a little silence as though each man in the room were respectfully understanding her feelings, and then Ives slipped his little book from his pocket and took out his pencil and turned to Holbrook and said: "Your full name is—"

He said: "Francis Begg Holbrook." He said it with a certain quiet dignity that I liked in spite of myself. Ives took it down and continued his questions. I had an idea that he liked to have us all together to watch how we were to each other; he seemed to be a great man for watching.

Ives asked: "I understand you've been staying in Santa Barbara, or Montecito rather, for the past two days?"

"Yes."

"Where were you staying?"

"At Mr. Stephen Farnum's house."

Ives turned to Janet.

"That is the number you called him at when I told you the news?"

"Yes," she said.

He turned back to Holbrook.

"You will realize, Mr. Holbrook, that these questions are purely routine, that I have to ask them. . . . Now then, I take it that there would be somebody who would verify the fact that you were in Montecito at four o'clock this afternoon?"

Holbrook looked at him. But even Francis Begg Holbrook couldn't succeed in looking at Ives like that. Ives had something you couldn't touch, not even if you were the Emperor of China. Holbrook gave ground. He answered Ives straight, without protestation.

He said: "Yes. Mr. Farnum would. I was with him."

Ives nodded.

"Thank you, Mr. Holbrook." He turned to Wilson and nodded again, and Wilson left the room. I realized Wilson had gone to call Steve Farnum, and I wondered why Ives was making such a plot about the thing.

HOLBROOK SAID: "But why four o'clock, Lieutenant. Do you mean it happened then?" He got Ives' nod and turned to Janet. "But you didn't call me till just now —what happened?"

Janet said: "I was at the beach, Begg, I only got back after dinner, and I called you directly Lieutenant Ives told me."

Ives turned to Holbrook.

"We have been given to understand," he said, "that your sister-in-law was in distress about some personal matter, and that this is the reason why she became engaged. Can you give me any help on this—do you have any idea what was troubling her?"

Holbrook stood thinking. "The reason why she became engaged?" He turned to Janet in a puzzled way, a little look of inquiry that needed no words. She gave a little shrug and shook her head.

"I don't know," she said. "Letty never said anything to me."

Holbrook said: "If she didn't say anything to you, she wouldn't have told anyone else." He turned back to Ives. "It's the first we've heard of this, Lieutenant," he said. "Might I ask from whom you got this information?"

Ives said, "Yes, I can tell you that—it was from Mr. Marford, her motion-picture director. He had found her work falling off, and he drove her home on Monday night, and she told him then. He said she was in considerable distress about the whole thing. You never got any hint of this, Mr. Holbrook?"

Holbrook shook his head. "Not a hint of it," he said. "She had been staying in the house too of late, and you'd think one of us would have noticed—of course she wasn't quite her usual self for the past week, but naturally I put that down to the fact that she had fallen in love. And now you tell me she hadn't. I find that hard to credit. Even if it were true, she'd hardly have told anyone else before telling my wife. They were very close—" He broke off a moment with a look at Janet, but she was taking it steadily, so he went on: "Have you checked up on this Marford—I mean, after all, it seems very strange to me, knowing Letty as I did, that she would confide in anyone to that extent. Maybe it's just his story—you say he drove her home one night?"

"Tell me, Major, would there be any way of tracing the man who made this?"

I felt something hard inside of me. I was just going to say something when Janet said: "Begg dear, we can't expect to know everything about Letty's affairs. Perhaps there was something that she never mentioned to me; there may very well have been, for that matter."

Somehow it seemed strange that she had said that. I was still thinking about it when Begg Holbrook went on talking. He said: "Well, I think it's very odd that Letty should have been so worried as all that, and told a stranger. If you ask me, either she was worried and would have told us, or she wasn't, and therefore his story is made up. What do you think of that, Lieutenant?"

Ives said evenly: "I think you can rely on the police to check thoroughly on everyone, Mr. Holbrook. We've been at it for some years, you know."

Wilson came in at that moment; it was almost as well timed as though Ives had pressed a buzzer after the remark he had just made to Begg Holbrook. Wilson said: "Okay, Chief. Farnum says he was there." I gathered Wilson didn't like Begg Holbrook much more than I did, or else he wouldn't have said that out loud.

Ives said, "Thank you, Wilson," and the look he gave Begg Holbrook had just the right nuance in it. "Thoroughly on everyone," it seemed to repeat.

Begg Holbrook said: "That's very efficient of you, Lieutenant. I presume you've also checked on Marford's alibi too?"

I said: "Mr. Marford happened to be directing a picture at the time."

He turned to me in surprise, but before he could say anything Ives' calm voice said: "As it happens, Major, Mr. Marford was not on the lot between the hours of three-thirty and four-thirty. He says he went shopping."

"And you mean you can't prove he did go shopping?"

"I do mean that."

I thought to myself that that was strange; I thought it was strange that a director would be away during a picture he was directing, and I tried to remember what went on in motion-picture studios from the little I had seen of them the times I went to have lunch with Tom. I remembered that once when we were having lunch they were all changing from one stage to another stage where they had different scenery set up for another scene and that process took a lot of time. It might well have been upon such an occasion that Tom took the opportunity to go shopping. I saw that Begg Holbrook was looking at me again with some curiosity as he said: "You mean you know Marford?"

I said: "I do. I'm staying with him at the moment."

He was puzzled. He looked at Janet. "But I thought you said he was the man who found Letty?"

She nodded, and now she was looking puzzled too; they were both looking at me.

I said: "I know what you're thinking. It's a coincidence—it's a terrific coincidence, isn't it, that I should accidentally find someone who knew a friend of mine. I've been thinking the same thing. I quite agree with you, but there it is. Either you believe me or you don't, that I'd never seen her before."

Nobody said anything for a moment. Then Ives took up an active rôle again. He took the necklace out of his pocket and handed it to me and said: "Tell me, Major—you probably know more about these things than I do. Would there be any way of tracing the man who made this, from what you can see?"

TAKING THE NECKLACE FROM HIM, I looked at it. I wondered what was in Ives' mind, why he had brought up the subject of the necklace just then. I knew Begg Holbrook was still looking at me, and I knew she was looking at me too. I knew very well that she was looking at me as I looked at the necklace, and I didn't take my eyes off the necklace. I examined it carefully and I said: "The shells come from Guam. It is made with airplane wire. The man who made it is probably a good swimmer, especially under water, and a flyer—that is to say, if it was the same man who dived for the shells and strung them together, and it probably was. Several of us used to make them in our squadron—"

And it was not until I had said all those words that my hands began to shake, and I looked very carefully at the way the wire was finished off in between the string of shells and the single pendant shell that hung from the middle of the total string. And I saw the thing then; I saw the one thing that I would never have believed, the way the wire was finished; there wasn't anybody else that I knew who finished them off in that way.

Ives was looking at me; his level stare was on my face, waiting, waiting. I wondered what to do. I looked at him carefully. There was something about Ives that I liked. In fact, I had not yet come across anything about him that I didn't like. He made you feel that he was not a man to further his own career at the expense of justice. In other words, he made you feel that he was a man. Ives had an integrity, and it was written upon him if you knew how to read men right.

I looked straight at him and I said: "Ives, I don't understand this, and I can only hope you do. I made that necklace myself. I gave it away among the others I made, way back in 1943."

His face didn't change, and neither did his stare. He kept looking at me. After a moment he gave his characteristic little sound that was neither a grunt nor yet a cough, but somehow a mixture of the two.

He said: "Who did you give this one to?"

"I can't tell. I made about a dozen. I can tell them by the way I twist the wire, but I can't remember each individual necklace, who got which one."

"You gave them to girls?"

"Mostly, yes."

Suddenly then, she was standing in front of me, she was standing in front of me and her eyes were blazing, blazing with blue fire.

"You did it," she said. "You killed her, you killed Letitia!"

Nobody else moved; nobody else said anything. It was as though they were all waiting to see what I was going to do, how I was going to react. I was looking at her. I was looking at her and thinking: "You poor kid, of course you have to think that!" And then I felt very sad: I felt very sad that she should be thinking that about me, and I looked back straight into her eyes, still feeling the sadness inside of me, and I shook my head a little and I said: "You know I would never do a thing like that." I spoke very quietly, as though it were only the two of us together in the room, and after a moment as she returned my look, the fire began to die out of her eyes. Then I said: "You know it completely." And then after a moment she said: "I don't know why I believe you, but for some reason I think I do, I think I do." And then she asked me with a puzzled look on her face: "But why did you pick her up if you'd never seen her before?"

I said quietly: "Would you rather I hadn't?"

She did not answer that in words, but a certain look of understanding came into her eyes, or rather not of understanding but of gratitude.

But Begg Holbrook answered it, and there was no understanding or gratitude in his manner, none at all.

He said: "The hell you found her and picked her up! You never found her in Darkwater Cañon at all, if you ask me. You and she had a quarrel about something, and you hit her and killed her, and then you brought her in to cover yourself up."

I knew Ives and Wilson were watching me; I knew I must not give away my intention by any movement of the muscles of my face, and I moved my feet and body and hands so fast that I got to him and hit him before they could move. I hit him as hard as I could, and he fell flat. He was out cold; there was no doubt of that. And then Ives and Wilson jumped me and had me by the arms, and they started things, but I didn't try to resist them. I'd done what I set out to do, and I didn't want to hurt anyone else.

Wilson said, "Shall I handcuff him?" to Ives and then Ives said: "I don't think that will be necessary, will it, Major?"

"No," I said. "It won't be necessary, but you'd better see if I killed him or not."

She was already kneeling beside him. She felt his pulse and opened his collar, and then we were all kneeling down beside him; even Wilson had let go of me when he saw that that was what Ives wanted. There was some blood coming from his mouth, and as we were all bending over him I caught the smell of whisky about him. He began to stir a little, and I could see after a moment that he was not badly hurt—just a couple of teeth and a swollen jaw. Wilson felt him over and nodded and said he would be all right. She looked across to me, her eyes hard now, and said: "I hope someone will do that to you some day." She got up and got a water pitcher from the table and came back to him and dipped his handkerchief in the water, and started gently bathing his face and dabbing away the blood.

Ives was watching Begg Holbrook as he came to. When Holbrook caught sight of me, he started at once to get to his feet, but Ives put a hand on his shoulder.

"Take it easy, Mr. Holbrook," he said. "You're pretty shaken up. We'll take care of the Major, all right."

"The sooner you get that murderer where he belongs, the better. If you don't, I will," Holbrook said.

Janet was still right by him, her arm around his shoulders.

"Try and rest, Begg dear, try and rest a little now," she said, and her voice was soothing.

Ives said: "We'll be going now, Mrs. Holbrook. Both of you try and get some sleep, and I'll be back in the morning." He nodded to Wilson and me, and we all went out. She was still beside him the last I saw of her as we went out.

CHAPTER FIVE

I COULD not understand about the necklace. The thing was utterly incredible. I tried to think as Ives and Wilson took me back to the station. They drove silently, neither of them saying a word, and I had a little time to marshal my thoughts together before they started in on me at the station, as I knew they were bound to do.

At first I could not think properly, with any clarity. My emotions were for a while so mixed up that they interfered with my thoughts. I did not know if it was her or if it was the necklace, or if it was a combination of everything that had happened so swiftly; but for a while there as the car sped on down the avenue, I found that I was literally unable to think as fast as I normally could when I was in a tight spot. I suppose there are a few times in everyone's life when this happens, when the gap between thought and feeling is sufficiently large to paralyze action, just as when a rabbit freezes in its tracks at the sudden proximity of an enemy. I think that the only reason I survived the war was solely due to the lucky fact that whenever this condition occurred in me, it never precisely synchronized with the moment of the highest danger-point but either just before it or just after it so that, in anticipation of what I was about to go through instead of being the victim of my enemy, he became mine.

So it was now, thinking like this as the car traveled on, I became calmer and found that my thoughts were beginning to take a coherent shape once again. One fact began to stand out in my mind most clearly, and that was that while there could well be one coincidence involved, such as my coming across a dead girl who was a friend of a friend of mine, there simply could not be two coincidences like that same girl wearing one of my necklaces. Yet since both things were established facts, then one of them could not in all logic be a coincidence. There must therefore obviously be a logical explanation of the second fact, the fact that she was wearing a necklace which I myself had made.

I had reached this point in my thoughts when, at that precise moment, Ives asked me a question.

He said: "Did you ever give one of your necklaces to your friend Marford?"

I think we had reached exactly the same point in the same train of thought at exactly the same moment. I don't know how a thing like that comes about, but I have sometimes noticed it happening, especially with two people who are in some degree sympathetic to each other, and I have sometimes thought that it is almost certain that there exists some form of thought-waves, in the same way that radio waves or any other waves exist, and that this current is transmitted mutually to and from associated persons.

I knew instantly that I had to lie, and to lie well and truly. If ever a man has to lie, he should do it like anything else, one hundred per cent.

I looked Ives straight in the face and I said: "No, Ives, I never did. I can see why you ask that. As a matter of fact, I was thinking along the same lines myself, but it won't work, because he never had one. I'm glad to say."

The whole thing, the whole of the awful thing, was going through my head as I was speaking, and even as I was saying the words to Ives, my mind was racing, racing a dark and bitter track, one that I couldn't bear to believe, yet one that I was forced to believe.

I remember Elsa's words to me the first night I had arrived to stay with them, Elsa at dinner, she at one end of the table, Tom at the other, with myself in between them. Elsa leaning forward with that little moué of distress that she would wear if she thought she was going to hurt somebody, leaning forward and saying in a humble little voice: "Foraker dear, a dreadful thing has happened. I got your necklace out to wear when I heard you were coming, and it's gone. I just cannot find it anywhere." And then Tom saying: "Yes, she even had me take up the rugs everywhere and look, but the darn' thing has completely disappeared." And I saying, "Hell, Elsa, that's just one of those things. It'll turn up," and then adding, because I never did like people apologizing to me, especially Elsa: "Anyway, it's Tom you should apologize to and not me; after all I gave it to Tom, you know; I didn't give it to you, now did I?" And then we had all laughed because I had given it to Tom that night in San Diego when he and Elsa had become engaged, so that he might give it to her, and we all knew that perfectly well. We had kidded about it that evening on the terrace of the Coronado hotel, sitting over our Martinis and looking at the sunset over the bay, and I'd gone and got the necklace and given it to Tom and said: "This is for you, Tom, to give to your best girl, and if you dare give it to anyone but Elsa, I'll wring your neck."

I remembered that all in a flash as I was telling my lie to Ives, and I thought of something else too, something that had just happened that very evening, something that fitted all too well. Tom had told me that long story about Letitia's problem, some great problem which she'd had that had been the cause of her getting engaged. Yet her twin sister had known nothing about a problem, and you wouldn't think that twins as close as that would keep anything, especially anything that important, secret from each other. It fitted all too well, that the problem was the bunk, that there was no problem except Tom's own problem when he found that the girl he was chasing had eventually decided against going through with it all. His being married would account for Janet and Begg's never having met him. It would account for many things. . . .

Ives was saying: "In that case, it leaves you behind the eight ball, doesn't it, Major?"

I said: "Yes. Yes, I guess it does."

We reached the station and parked, and we all got out. They led me in to the same room that they had taken me into before, only this time it was night, and they lit my part of the room with a bright white light. It was what I had been waiting for all along, the white lights. I had often heard about them, and now this was it. I was determined to hold everything, I was determined they wouldn't get anything out of me about Tom. I had to see Tom first, I had to see him and face him with it and find out for sure that I wasn't mistaken. I was still for Tom, for some possible loophole.

Wilson started in. It was about the first time I had heard anything out of Wilson the whole evening, ever since he had driven me around to the house, in fact. But now it seemed that he was on his own territory, a place where he had a certain amount of latitude from his chief, and he wasn't slow in taking it, either.

He said: "Where were you this afternoon from the hours of one to four?"

I had not been expecting that question, but I gave the only answer that I could; I gave him the truth.

"I was at lunch with Mrs. Marford from one to about one-forty-five or two o'clock. After that I wrote a couple of letters in my room at their house. After that—I suppose it must have been around three or so—I took the sedan, and first I went to the post office and mailed the letters; then I went to a drugstore on Chanley and had a chocolate malt. That must have taken me till around three-fifteen. Then I went to the gas station nearby and had the tank filled, and after that I drove up through Darkwater Cañon Alley on my way to the hills. Must have been between three-thirty and four that I found her, I suppose. You know what time it was when I brought her in. Couldn't have been after four."

Wilson said: "I'm asking you to tell me what you did, not what I did."

I said nothing. I knew he was trying to get me wrong side up, and I was not going in for that. So I said nothing, just waited for him. He didn't care for that at all.

He said: "In other words, you can't account for your movements from the time you left Mrs. Marford at two o'clock?"

"I've just done so."

"Who did you speak to in the drugstore?"

"The waitress."

"What did she look like?"

"A tired blonde who needed a permanent. Yellow hair and brown eyes."

"What did you say to her?"

"Chocolate malt, please."

"Anything else?"

"I already said she was a tired blonde who—"

"Cut that out. Who did you speak to in the gas station?"

"Man about thirty, dark hair, pleasant smile. I didn't notice the color of his eyes. I said: 'Will you fill her up and check everything, please.' He said: 'You bet'."

"Got a good memory, haven't you, Major?"

"I've never had any complaints."

"Then why didn't you remember your own necklace when you saw it round the stiff's neck?"

I counted one to ten. I counted one to ten inside myself calmly and evenly. Wilson had leaned forward a little on that last question, and I could see his damned face outlined in the fringe of the white light. I finished counting, and then I said: "Because I had more important things to think about just then, such as looking to see if she was dead, looking to see how, looking to see any tracks, deciding whether to leave her there or bring her right in. But you wouldn't understand that, would you?"

Ives took over. He gave a little wave of his hand to Wilson and said to me: "Who did you give all your necklaces to?"

I don't know if Ives took over then in order to save time, or to stop Wilson getting mad before I did, or to take advantage of my temporary upset; but I think it was probably a combination of all three factors. In his shoes I think I would have done the same, because it was good timing. I'd already noticed that about Ives; he was strong on timing.

I said: "I'd have to think. Do you want a complete list?"

"Yes."

I said: "Then give me five minutes without that light."

Wilson started to say something, but Ives cut in fast.

"All right, Major," he said. He snapped off the big light, leaving a small low one burning in the corner of the room. "But don't forget," he went on, "I want that list complete."

I WONDERED IF HE already doubted my word about Tom or not. I realized he could very easily check up if he saw Elsa right quick before I could get to her. But somehow I didn't think he did doubt my word. Besides, he too had met Tom, and must have judged him as an unlikely candidate for murder, although when you get right down to murder, and especially what the French call the *crime passionnel*, then there are very few virile people who could be definitely ruled out, especially if they were matched against the provoking type of girl. But I couldn't think of Letitia like that, not the twin sister of Janet. Not unless the nature of each girl was quite different, one from the other. I'd never come across such similar twins before, but I knew there were two types of twins, what they call one-egg twins and two-egg twins, the first deriving from the father and the second from the mother. I'd studied it in my embryology class and I'd met the second kind of twins several times, and they could be just as different from each other both in sex and in nature as any pair of sisters or brother and sister born at different times. But the one-egg variety was quite another matter. There you really had something. They were literally one person cut in two, a splitting of the male cell into two parts. I didn't see how they could vary too much, one from the other, but of course I couldn't be sure. I was getting all mixed up with myself. Maybe I needed some sleep. But first I had to think, I had to concentrate on necklaces, I had to think of all the people I'd given them to and it was two years, easily two years, more like three years ago now.

I took out my handkerchief and wiped my forehead and got up from my chair and stretched my legs and got a pencil from the desk and took a sheet of paper from under Wilson's nose. I sat down again and felt better. I sent my mind back, back to a homecoming during the war. I was on the PBY coming into San Francisco, full with that quiet flush of a first leave, looking down at the Golden Gate, a bunch of necklaces in my hands that I was packing up before landing, and someone sitting beside me saying: "I wish you'd sell me one of those darn' things, Foraker; I'm just a plain simple person, and I need an edge like that with a girl." Sellick—George Sellick; that was his name. I gave him one because I had always liked George—he wasn't easy to get on with until you knew him well, one of those shy men who keep themselves to themselves as much as anyone can in a war, and I couldn't help thinking to myself as I gave it to him that even with a necklace, he would find the going on the difficult side. I put his name down on my list for what it was worth. I hadn't seen him in eighteen months, and except that he had been invalided out with malaria, I had no idea what had become of him.

I tried to think what other men I had given necklaces to, and I remembered the old man on Daytona Beach who had exchanged one for an Indian dagger—he said I reminded him of his son who was killed in the Pacific, how his son had said he was bringing home a necklace for his mother, and neither he nor the necklace had ever arrived; and now here I was with a necklace, the same age as his boy, and so on, the way they do, the bereaved ones . . . I had given him a necklace, and he had pressed the dagger on me, saying its bearer always bore a charmed life in combat, and I was to have it in my plane. I did so later when I next went out; I wired it firmly in beside my instruments, and I could always see it in the tail of my eye.

I put the old man's name down, Admiral Gregg, and tried to remember what other men there might have been, but there were no more, I knew that. The rest had been, except for Tom and one for my mother, all given to girls—girls that I'd met here, there and anywhere; I had often got quite a kick out of the fact that I would spend so long diving for the shells, then days and days in stringing them together, working away at them whenever we had spare time on our hands, and then giving all that away, just casually, to a pair of laughing eyes or a smile or because of a moment in the moonlight.

I tried to remember all their names—names and places, names and places . . . I eventually managed to get all the first names and a lot of the last names, but for some of them I didn't even have their telephone numbers. I looked in my little book that I still had in my pocket, and got what numbers and addresses I could out of it. But they were not complete. The book brought it back, the heady times of the champagne days embossed in the middle of a war. Telephone numbers in pencil, in ink, one done in lipstick, scrawled in large girlish figures diagonally across the page. . . .

I counted them. I counted them all, and found that they equaled the number of necklaces that I had made, eleven altogether, Tom, George, Admiral Gregg, my mother, and seven girls. That made eleven. That was the complete list. That made ten for Ives, for of course I omitted Tom's name.

I got up and handed it to Ives.

"You won't find all the names complete, and some have no addresses, but maybe you can trace them all."

I thought to myself it was a fine thing to give the police the names of all your past girl friends; but maybe in a case of murder most of them would forgive me.

Ives said: "You don't quite seem to realize that it is important for you that we do trace them all, Major."

"Sure I do. But I can't help you any more than that."

Ives looked down the list. I was trying to make out just what he thought was important and what he didn't think was important. Whether, in fact, he thought the list was important at all, or merely my reactions about the whole affair. He gave a little sigh as he scanned the list for the second time over, and then he beckoned to Wilson.

"Get this thing going right away. I want every necklace found." He looked at Wilson with an almost whimsical expression in his eyes. "After you've been able to trace all these ladies, of course. Use the Major as much as you need for that. He'll be on call at Mr. Marford's house any time you should need him for any identification purposes."

Wilson looked at Ives in his own bleak way. He started to say something, then thought better of it, glanced at me and then went out.

Ives turned to me.

"I might tell you here and now, Major, that this is the most unorthodox procedure I've ever indulged in. But don't let that make you think that it won't pay off in the end, whoever is at the bottom of this thing. Now you may go. And remain on call day and night until I clear you." And then he added softly: "Or don't."

I said good night to him and got up. I had nothing more to say to him or to anyone else that night. My mind was too full with Tom and Elsa; and above all, I wanted to avoid them too, and sleep a full ten hours before I tackled any other problems. I realized, as I hit the night air outside the station on my way down the steps to the car, that I was far, far more tired than I had been for many months, almost as tired, in fact, as those far days and nights on Guadalcanal, so long, long ago.

Chapter Six

WHEN I woke up next morning it was already past eleven. I lay in bed for a good half-hour before getting up, thinking out my approach toward Tom and Elsa. I knew that by that hour Tom would be at the studio and that Elsa would be around alone, and I thought to myself that in any case it was far better that I approach Elsa rather than Tom, although of course I did not for a moment intend to let her know in any way what it was I was after.

I got up and dressed. As I left my room I found that I had thought so much about the whole thing and from so many different angles that now I had no clear plan in my head to follow at all and was completely confused about it all. I decided that the only thing to do was to leave things to happen as they went along with Elsa and trust to my instinct. I have often found that this process was the right one to follow, to think a thing out first and then to leave it to the unconscious to follow its own course in the subsequent action taken. Certainly it is a lot better than just to let life happen without thinking about it first, and equally it is often better than to stick to a rigid plan without regard to the invariably unexpected course that the turn of events provides in nearly every action in life—unexpected because in real life one is dealing with another human being, whereas in merely theory one is only dealing with oneself.

Elsa was in the nursery with the baby as I passed it on my way to breakfast. The baby was crawling at a good pace across the floor and Elsa was laughing at him. She looked up at me, and I saw that for all her laughing with her baby, things were not as they should be with her.

I hit him as hard as I could; he fell flat.

We said good morning to each other, and she picked up the baby in her arms and came down with me to the dining-room and sat at the table with the child on her lap while I ate.

I said: "This is the second meal running that we've done this—I'm not being the best of house guests."

"How did things go last night?" she asked me.

I told her everything that had happened at the Holbrooks' except for the necklace incident. I was also careful to skip any mention of my talk with Tom. She listened very carefully to all I had to say. When I came to the part about Begg Holbrook, she paid particular attention, and since I was unable to mention the necklace, the picture made Holbrook's case look worse than it had.

She said: "It sounds like the husband to me."

"I've been thinking that too," I told her—because I had. "But would you tell me why he would kill his wife's twin sister, and even if he had wanted to, how he could possibly have done so when he was in Santa Barbara at the time she was killed in Chanley Heights?"

"I don't know why," Elsa said slowly, "but how do you know she was killed in Chanley Heights? She could have been dropped there later, couldn't she?"

"Not much later, because she was still warm, and also it still doesn't help with Holbrook, since he has an iron-tight alibi. He was a good ninety minutes away, and he has proved it. Besides, what possible motivation could he have for doing such a thing?"

"What motivation did he have for picking a fight with you?"

I couldn't tell her about the necklace, so I changed the subject. "What I don't understand," I said, "is why Tom was so upset last night."

She looked at me.

"I was going to ask you that," she said. "He sent me out of the room, if you remember."

I said: "It seems he was afraid about me, and I suppose he thought the two of us together in such a case would be better. The coincidence of my meeting someone he knew like that was a little startling, I guess. But chiefly I was unable to explain to him why I picked her up. I couldn't tell him what I told you, somehow."

She sat quiet a moment.

"I wonder," she said in a strange and overdeliberate voice, "if Tom had been seeing more of that girl than he had told me."

I watched the baby on his mother's lap trying his best to push a tablespoon down his throat. He had his mother's eyes and hair, but he had his father's head; his head was shaped very much like Tom's head. I

was thinking to myself what to say, what had provoked Elsa of all people to talk like that, and I sat very still for a moment, not even continuing to eat.

I asked: "What makes you say that, Elsa?"

She looked very frankly at me and said: "Things have not been the same between us since he came back. I suppose we're not the only couple, but—that doesn't help exactly."

"How long has this been going on?"

She gave a little shrug.

"Oh—in a way I suppose it's been there ever since he came back, though we didn't either of us really know it for a while. I expected him to be the same Tom who went away, and he expected me to have changed with him. Maybe it will turn out all right in the end, but right now it's a bit trying, to put it mildly. When it comes to sending me out of the room to talk about a girl, it's going a little far. I don't know if I can take that sort of thing much longer, Foraker. In fact, if it weren't for Peter—" She fondled the baby's hair, running it through her fingers and letting her voice die away.

I sat thinking. I'd had no idea. And now it looked worse than ever for Tom. I felt mean now, mean to be dragging things out of Elsa like this on false pretenses, but I could not possibly tell her anything about the necklace. I knew I couldn't possibly do that. I wondered how to handle the thing. I couldn't see my way at all clearly. My thoughts were mixed up too by the shock of hearing from her about the strain in her and Tom's relationship.

I switched my thoughts back to practicalities. I had to make sure somehow about that necklace. I knew that at any moment Ives might contact either Elsa or Tom about it. And too, I could not sit any longer without saying something to her, making some kind of comment on what she had been talking about.

I said: "Tell me, Elsa dear, do you really think Tom has changed fundamentally since the San Diego days?"

"I suppose not," she said after a moment's thought. "I suppose if I really thought he had, I wouldn't still be sitting here. But I do think he saw more of that girl than he told me."

Here was I trying to pump her and get the conversation around to San Diego and the necklace, and instead she was trying to pump me, trying to find out what Tom had said about Letitia.

I said: "He said something about her, that he had met her through her work, and that because it was falling off he had had a talk with her, and naturally he was shocked at her death; but I think you're making too much of it, Elsa. I think you should think back to those San Diego days—remember the night you got engaged and I gave him the necklace for you?"

Her expression clouded over a little, and she moved her chair back and put Peter on her hip.

"I hardly think this is the moment to reminisce about that." She got up. "Besides," she went on with a swift gathering of herself back to her normal balance, "it's time for Peter to get some fresh air."

AND THAT WAS THAT. I thought that the next thing I'd better do would be to go and see Janet and try to pump her about that problem. If Letitia had really had a problem, then that made the picture look brighter for Tom. And too, Janet might well know answers to a number of things which would help clear things up in my mind.

I was on my way out when the telephone rang. It was Tom. He wanted to speak to me, he said, and he was glad I had answered. He asked where Elsa was, and I told him she had just taken Peter out for his walk. He said he would be right around, and please for me to await his return. Then he said that if Ives called up in the meantime and asked me if I had ever given him or Elsa a necklace, that I was to say no. And then he hung up.

I sat down and tried to figure it, and failed. I got up again and walked around the downstairs rooms of the house and waited for Tom. When he came in, it could not really have been more than fifteen minutes, but it seemed an eternity.

WE WENT INTO THE DEN and Tom shut the door.

He said: "Why didn't you tell me you gave Letitia Elsa's necklace?"

I looked at him.

"What makes you think I gave her Elsa's?"

"I knew Elsa lost it after you came. I knew you had no necklaces of your own left. And Ives told me Letitia was wearing one of your necklaces, and that you'd admitted it, and that you had denied ever having given me one. Now, Foraker, will you please tell me why you denied to me last night ever having met Letitia?"

I said: "Tom, you mean you denied to Ives that I'd given you a necklace, you said that in order to protect me—was that it?"

"Of course. I wanted to tackle you first. Why did you—"

I interrupted him. I said: "Does it occur to you that I lied to Ives for the same reason you did—in order to protect you?"

There was a long silence.

Tom said slowly: "And you mean you thought I—"

I nodded.

"And you never had met her, then?"

"Never, Tom."

He sat down and tried to figure things out. I lit a cigarette and watched him and tried to think too. He was genuine enough, as far as you could tell with Tom. And I had always thought I could tell the whole way too; but since hearing Elsa's news about him, my faith was a little shaken. After all, it could be an act, and it certainly suited Tom to deny having had a necklace if he were guilty, except that I couldn't see how he would know that Elsa would deny it too, in case Ives questioned her.

Tom said: "This makes it different. I believe you, for some cockeyed reason. I had been going to tell Elsa about the necklace to protect you in case Ives called her and asked her, but now that you don't need protection, I'd just as soon not. You see, she might think I'd given Letitia the necklace myself."

I said: "Tom, it's none of my business how things are between you and Elsa, but there's this to consider: If you don't tell her about the necklace, and then if Ives checks with her to see if I ever gave either of you one of them, she will say yes, that I did. Now then, your goose will be properly cooked, because you lied to Ives. Mine will be too, for that matter, but I don't mind that, because I'm sure I can get out of it. Someone must have given Letitia that necklace, and in the end we'll find out who. But in the meantime you'll be getting publicity which will ruin you in your work, and you know it. I would advise you to tell Elsa, so that she can deny it to Ives too, that she ever had a necklace. It's stupid to go halfway in a lie, anyway. I know that may mean some kind of private showdown between you and Elsa; but you'll have that coming sooner or later anyway if there's any trouble between you, so you might just as well have it now and get it over with. And in the meantime we can find out who the dickens did give Letitia one of my necklaces if it wasn't you or I."

I didn't convince myself over my last remark; those statistics were still too much against it. I couldn't help believing that Tom had given her the necklace even as I was speaking, that in fact he had seen more of her than he had made out to me earlier. I wondered again about his absence during that afternoon when she was killed.

It wasn't that I thought he had killed her, but I did think he knew more than he made out.

Elsa came in just then. She had Peter in his little go-cart, and she wheeled it into the front hall by the open door of the drawing-room where Tom and I were talking. When she saw Tom, she got a little more affable than usual, in the way that she had when she was trying to cover up; and I could see that a situation had grown up between them since I had last seen them together.

She said: "Why, hello, Tom, what brings you back so early?"

Tom said: "I just dropped in a moment to see Foraker. Something came up with the authorities, identification and so on, and I wanted to tell him what had been said."

"Is everything all right?" Elsa asked.

"Looks okay to me." Tom's voice had just the right ring to it as he walked over to Peter and started to make faces at him and poke him with his finger. Peter stared back at him with unblinking eyes, and gave a chuckle that came from way down inside that tiny body of his. I caught a faint mist in Elsa's eyes as she watched them.

The telephone rang just then. Elsa was nearest, so she picked it up, and I was close enough to recognize that unmistakable quality that Ives' voice had, a little staccato and a little on the melodious side too. I couldn't hear his words of course, but I waited for Elsa's reply, and I watched her and Tom as I waited. Tom had stopped fooling with the baby and was standing very still. I knew he was waiting for the same thing that I was.

And then Elsa said: "Yes, this is she."

There was some more from Ives. It sounded like a question, but I could not be sure it was a question. I saw Elsa stiffen a little. There was just the slightest tensing of her body as she stood there with her back turned toward me, holding the telephone to her ear. And then her head turned a little and I knew she was looking toward Tom, although I could not see her eyes. I too looked at Tom now, and I saw that he was still standing as still as ever, but now his eyes were on Elsa's, and I could see that there was a passage between those two people, a passage of communication that could have been understanding, or misunderstanding, or a combination of the two. The whole thing took only the briefest instant. There was only the briefest interval of pauses in actual time between Ives' question and Elsa's answer.

She said into the telephone, still looking at Tom: "No, Lieutenant, I'm afraid I've never owned a necklace like that. Yes, I know Major Foraker made them, but he never gave me one—I think he had given them all away by the time he met me; and anyway, you know, Lieutenant, I was already engaged to my husband then. I hope there's nothing wrong?"

There was a little more from Ives, and then she said good-by and hung up.

She was still looking at Tom and standing very straight now after she had put down the telephone, and she said: "I guess there isn't much to say, except I'll get it over with as soon as possible." And then her eyes fell on Peter, and she looked for a moment as if she were going to break right there, but she didn't. Instead she picked him up in her arms, and then she said, with her face half muffled against the baby's clothes: "I do think you might have given her some *other* necklace."

Tom didn't say anything. He just stood where he was and didn't say anything, his face very ponderous now, in the way that it would go when he was in a spot.

I said: "Elsa, how do you know that it wasn't I who gave Letitia your necklace?"

She looked at me a moment, and now I saw that her eyes were moist, and she gave a little half-smile through her tears and shook her head a little and said: "No, Foraker, not after what you told me about your finding her last night, and how you felt. I know you too well to believe that you were doing any acting with me last night."

And then she left the room carrying Peter, and Tom and I were alone together as we had been before she came in; but now the atmosphere was quite different between us, for I too was now convinced that Tom had given Letitia that necklace, and I didn't like it, however sorry I might be feeling for him. And so I too left the room.

Chapter Seven

T wasn't that I thought for a moment that Tom had killed Letitia; and I knew that Elsa did not think so either, but whoever had done so had in my opinion probably done so through jealousy of her affair with Tom.

I decided to go and see Janet Holbrook and try to find out from her or her husband what man or men Letitia had been seeing before she met Tom. The sooner we could find out just who the man was who caused her death, the sooner would Tom be out of something which I knew might at any moment blow up in our faces.

As far as Ives was concerned, I had a perfect reason for making inquiries from the Holbrooks. The fact that she had been wearing one of my necklaces was enough to satisfy him on that point. And it would look to Ives even better from my own personal-security point of view that I should be making my own investigations than not, because if I were the killer I would be unlikely to do so.

I called the Holbrooks' house and got straight on to Janet. I recognized her voice directly she spoke. It was soft and cool and honest.

"Hullo," she said.

I said: "May I speak to Mr. or Mrs. Holbrook, please?"

Her voice got hard as she recognized mine.

"This is Mrs. Holbrook."

I said: "Good morning, Mrs. Holbrook; this is Major Foraker."

"Yes, Major Foraker?"

I thought to myself that I would have to be very good indeed to talk her into seeing me.

I said: "I called to ask after your husband."

"My husband is in bed. He is not feeling very well, Major Foraker, as you may appreciate."

"I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?"

"Not a thing, thank you."

"I'm truly sorry to have distressed you. I guess I was pretty strung up."

"Evidently."

"He did call me a murderer, you know."

"The whole thing is quite unimportant. I have other things to be concerned about just now as you should know. Good-by, Major."

"Wait a moment, please. It's about that that I wanted to talk to you. Perhaps you would let me come round for half an hour or so?"

There was a pause.

"You mean something about—about Letty?"

"Yes."

"Why can't you talk to the police?"

I thought a moment. I knew I couldn't tell her the truth about it being Tom's necklace, and I knew I had to think of a reason to satisfy her question.

I said: "She was wearing a necklace I made. You must know that puts me in a very bad position with the police. Please let me see you. After all, I can probably help."

"Do you mean you can tell me something you daren't tell the police?"

I thought hard. I hadn't realized quite how smart she was, but I should have known how sharpened all her senses would be in such a situation.

"It certainly will look bad for all of you when I tell him, won't it?"

I said: "I can't say anything over the telephone."

That did it. She said, "Come around in half an hour," and hung up.

On my way over to the house I thought of my approach. I knew it would have to be good. There were no police cars outside the house. I wondered, as I rang the bell and waited, what Ives was doing.

The maid opened the door and showed me into the same room where I had been the previous night. Somehow it seemed æons ago.

She was standing by the window. It was the first time that I had seen her by daylight. I had seen Letitia by daylight, but Letitia had been dead. I had imagined her alive in the sunlight, but I had never seen such a thing; and until you actually see a thing like that, you cannot realize even the half of what you will experience in sensation. I looked at Janet alive in the daylight, and I knew that nothing I had imagined approached the real seeing of her.

I said: "It is very good of you to see me, Mrs. Holbrook. I think I know of something which may help."

She came a step toward me. There was a look in her eyes that made me feel a heel for having raised hope. You could see she had been thinking of her sister all through the night.

She said: "What is it?"

"Let's sit down," I said. "This may take a little time."

She looked at me, doubtfully. I sat down without waiting for her. I knew she would have started in about my talking to Ives again, if I had not sat down quickly and kept the upper hand that way. After a moment she sat down too and waited.

"The thing is this," I said. "Someone who had received one of my necklaces was seeing your sister. This much we know. Now, am I to understand that you would definitely recognize his voice if you heard it?"

"You mean you know who it might be, and don't wish to tell Lieutenant Ives?"

I looked at her straight.

"I didn't say that at all, Mrs. Holbrook. I must ask you to go along with me a little way in this thing. Later on perhaps you will see why."

She sat thinking. She had a way of sitting with her head a little cocked on one side, and I received a strange feeling in me as I looked at her; I felt that here is a girl, here is a girl for me. I found my swift thoughts becoming chaotic, sitting there so close to her. I thought to myself: *What is the matter with Foraker? You had better be careful what you say, or you will get Tom in a bad place. Why should you get all romantic about this woman? She is somebody else's woman, anyway; she cannot be yours.*

She said: "You know, Major Foraker, I trust you already much further than I should. I don't know why; it's a feeling, I guess. But I can't be expected to go too far on my feelings where Letty's concerned. Now I've been perfectly frank with you, and I shall expect you to be the same with me."

I said: "Thank you. Then I shall be frank. It isn't that I'm trying to conceal anything from the police. On the contrary, I have every reason to find the murderer as soon as possible. And I think that by talking with you who knew your sister where the police do not, I shall be able to piece things together with you much quicker than they can."

It was the best I could do in that particular line just then and I could only hope she would believe me and play ball.

She said, "Well," and she looked at me carefully a moment, and then she said: "We can try."

I said: "About the problem she had which Captain Marford mentioned, both to me and also to the police, haven't you any inkling at all as to what that might have been?"

She did not answer me, and I got an instantaneous feeling that somehow I had put a foot wrong, but just where I could not tell. And then she said: "It does seem strange that she should have spoken of anything so personal to Captain Marford if he was only just her director, doesn't it?"

I said quickly: "Surely you're not implying that your sister—"

She cut right in: "I'm not implying anything about Letty, Major Foraker. I'm implying that Captain Marford could not have got such a thing out of her, if there were such a thing as a problem, mark you, unless he had wheedled it out somehow. Letty was never a talker about herself."

"Then isn't it conceivable that she spoke to nobody, not even you, about this thing, which could have been very serious, so bad that eventually it broke her down to talk over with a friend who happened to be along when the time was ripe?"

She thought hard about that for a moment, and I added: "After all, she didn't tell Captain Marford what the problem was, but simply that she had a problem."

Janet sat thinking of Letitia with the far-away look in her eyes that I ever afterward came to associate with Janet when she was thinking of her twin sister. It was like a girl looking at herself in a mirror, yet at the same time with an affection and understanding that no girl could have about herself in a mirror.

"Yes," she said at last, "yes, Letty could have done just that." She looked at me with a new interest. "Though how you could have known such a thing about us I don't know."

I did not answer. I simply looked back at her. And after a moment she lowered her eyes and then swiftly changed the subject.

"You said something about my recognizing the man's voice. Did you have anyone special in mind?"

I said quickly: "No. No one special. But I wished to get clear in my mind whether or not you really could recognize the voice. For if you can, you see, it is going to help us a lot, since I know all the people who had my necklaces."

She must have accepted my words for she said: "But I thought you gave them all to girls, Major?" And her tone was not exactly sympathetic.

I said evenly: "Mostly to girls, yes. Not all."

"You mean you gave some of them to friends of yours, such as Captain Marford, for instance?"

I didn't know why she said that; I suppose it was an obvious lucky shot. I said: "As a matter of fact, I gave one to a George Sellick, who was in our squadron, and I gave another to an admiral in Florida who had lost his son. I also gave one to my mother, but I don't think

we need worry about that one. Of course, it might have been a friend of one of the girls."

She ignored the last sentence. She said: "What did this George Sellick's voice sound like?"

"Normal pitch. Like many others. Hard to distinguish in words, I'd say."

I was thinking to myself that Tom's voice could be described the same way. It could easily have been Tom's voice. For that matter, I was darn' sure it *was* Tom's voice.

She said: "Well, didn't you tell all this to Lieutenant Ives?"

"Certainly."

"Then what is it you want to tell me you can't tell him?"

"I want to find out from you what your sister's problem was."

She didn't like that at all. Her blue eyes were sparking now, and she had that same hard expression as she looked at me that she had had the evening before when I hit her husband.

She got up and stood straight and said: "I'll trouble you to get out of here. You lied to me when you said you knew something you couldn't tell the police, just to come in here and ask questions, questions about my sister."

I sat right where I was and looked at her.

"No more than you lied when you said last night you didn't know of any problem your sister might have had. I know now you were lying; at the time I wasn't sure, but now I am. If you'd tell me, we might be able to figure something out."

"I refuse to discuss my sister's personal life with you. I'll trouble you to get out."

"Then you do know, don't you?"

"Do I have to get someone to throw you out?"

"She was in love with someone—was that it?"

She sat down suddenly. She looked at me and said: "What are you trying to do?"

"I'm trying to find out who killed her."

"Then find who gave her the necklace, because he did it."

"What makes you so sure of that?"

"Because—" She checked herself and looked at me. "What do you mean? Are you trying to say that the man who gave her the necklace is not the man who killed her?"

"Yes."

She stood up suddenly again.

"You know who it was. You know who it was, don't you? And you're trying to protect him. It was a friend of yours. It was Captain Marford—that's who it was! And he murdered Letty when she refused to marry him."

"Tom's married; and I know he would never have killed her."

ABRUPTLY I REALIZED what I had said. It was too late to get it back. I got up quickly and went across to her. She was standing like stone. I put a hand on her arm, or rather I started to put a hand on her arm, but she was standing like stone and I let my hand drop to my side. I said: "Look, you must believe me about Tom. I know he gave her the necklace, but I know one hundred per cent that it just isn't in his character to do a horrible thing like that."

It was no good. I could see right then and there that it was absolutely no good at all. . . . I tried another way. Suddenly I thought I saw a way, from what she had just said.

I said: "What makes you so sure that the other man didn't kill her out of jealousy about her being with Tom?"

At first I thought that she hadn't heard me, she was standing so still and so intent upon her own thoughts about Tom that were inside of her. But she must have heard, because after a little while she answered me, and the words were clear and definite.

She said: "Because the other man wasn't in love with her."

I looked at her.

"You mean you knew all about this, and you didn't tell the police?"

"It's none of their business. It's nobody's business."

"Doesn't it occur to you he might be the one who—killed her?"

"I've just told you he wasn't in love with her."

"You can't ever be sure of a thing like that."

"I'm quite sure."

I could tell she was sure by her voice, by her stillness, and the whole way that she was standing there in front of me.

"How can you be so sure of a thing like that?"

She knew I had the upper hand. I knew she knew that I could easily tell Ives myself if she didn't satisfy me. I knew, and she knew, that she had to tell me how she was so sure, and she saw it then.

At last she said quite simply: "Because he is in love with me; that's how I am so sure, Major Foraker."

FOR A MOMENT I couldn't quite take it in, I couldn't quite take it in that Janet would have a lover—not Janet, somehow. And then I saw that there was a loophole to that, and I asked her: "Are you in love with him? I suppose you're not, because if you were, you would not still be married to your husband. You would get free. You would, wouldn't you, Janet?"

It was strange just then; I don't believe either she or I noticed that I had called her Janet.

She said: "Yes, I would. I would not stay with someone I did not love."

I was thinking about all she had said. I could see the whole picture now, Letitia's problem, how she was in love with a man who was in love with Janet, whom Janet did not love because she loved her husband. I saw how Janet could of course never have told Ives about that, because it was none of Ives' business, how she could never even have told Begg about it, because of loyalty to her twin sister, and how that would account for her telling Begg she knew of no problem, and how it would account for Begg's own ignorance of Letitia's problem too. But the one thing I couldn't see was where it left Tom.

I said: "Now I can understand why you think Tom killed her—presuming, as we both do, that it was he who gave her the necklace. You think he killed her out of rage at being refused in the end. You think that Tom twisted her story just a little bit, don't you, that the man she was considering marrying to avoid her unrequited love was Tom himself, and not someone else, and that when she finally decided against him, he killed her in rage—is that it?"

She nodded.

"Certainly, how else could it have been?"

I said: "I don't know how else it could have been, but I'm very sure Tom wouldn't have done that. For one thing, as I said just now, he's married himself."

"Is he happily married?"

"They've got a baby, and they're both very dear people."

"You didn't answer me. In other words, they're not happy."

"Even if there is some trouble that doesn't mean—"

She said: "What is the Marfords' number?" and walked over to the telephone on the little table by the divan in the corner of the room.

"What are you going to do?"

She stood by the telephone, and I could see that the strain was truly beginning to tell now; her face was white with it all.

"I'm going to call Captain Marford and see if I recognize his voice or not."

"But even if you did, even if it were he who was with Letitia, that doesn't mean that he—"

It was no use; it wasn't that she exactly cut me short, but I could see as the words were in midair that nothing I could say would stop her, that there was nothing to be done but give her the number. She just stood there with her hand on the receiver waiting for me to tell her, and I gave it to her. She dialed the number, and I stood waiting with her. After a period of waiting that might have been thirty seconds and could not have been thirty years, Janet spoke into the receiver to somebody, and she said:

"May I speak to Captain Marford, please?"

Then there was another pause, quite a short one this time, and she said: "This is Mrs. Holbrook speaking. I would like to ask him something about my sister, Letitia Lane."

After a while I could hear a man's voice saying hullo through the receiver, and then Janet said: "Hullo, is that Captain Marford?" And then I saw a little puzzled frown come over her face as she stood listening to the reply, and then she said: "I'm sure you will forgive my troubling you, Captain Marford, but I am most anxious for some help, and I think you could give it to me." Tom must have said something more to that; I could hear a voice vaguely but without hearing any words, and I could see the intent concentration upon Janet's face as it was poised above the receiver, and the little lines of puzzle were still there in between her eyebrows. She said: "Can you remember by any chance what night it was that you drove her home when she told you about her problem?"

This time, after the reply had been made, she seemed to become a little more definite in her attitude, and then she said: "Well, thank you very much, Captain Marford, and if I want to know anything further, I will not hesitate to call you. Thank you very much. Good-by."

She put the receiver back on the hook and stood for a moment alone with her thoughts, and then she turned to me and looked at me and said: "Do you know, I could almost swear that that couldn't possibly have been the voice I heard. Of course the telephone— But I could almost be sure that that wasn't the voice."

I didn't know what to think. I simply found myself unable to think at all. The whole thing was so utterly unexpected. I had thought that she was bound to say that she had no doubt that it was Tom's voice she had heard saying good-night to her sister, and now I found that she wasn't sure—that in fact it meant that it couldn't have been Tom's voice or else she would have been sure; I knew she would have been sure if it had been his voice.

"In that case," I said, "it could have been that while Tom gave her the necklace, there was some other guy she was talking about and who you heard saying good-night to her. In fact, Tom could have been telling the truth all along. But then, why would he have given her the necklace?"

I FOUND I HAD STARTED walking up and down and was half talking to myself. She was watching me, and now there was a certain understanding in her eyes.

"Did he say that he had given it to her?" she asked me.

"No, he didn't actually say so, but the thing's vanished. His wife got it out ready to wear when she heard I was arriving to stay with them, because I gave it to them when they were engaged. Then it vanished."

"And you didn't tell Lieutenant Ives you had given him one of your necklaces?"

"Not after I found that he knew your sister, no. It looked much too bad for him, don't you see."

She said: "Yes, but why didn't he tell Lieutenant Ives himself, or his wife? That certainly seems strange."

"Because his wife was protecting him, and he was protecting me."

Begg Holbrook's voice spoke from the doorway.

"It certainly will look bad for all of you when I tell him, won't it?"

She and I turned together, to see him standing there in the doorway. How long he had been there I don't know. It couldn't have been very long, or I would have seen him. But he had certainly been there long enough.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HE was wearing pajamas and a dressing-gown and his hair was tousled. His face was not pretty after last night. His pajama coat was open at the neck, and you could see he had a soft and nearly hairless skin, tanned to a golden brown. His breathing was above normal, and in those china-blue eyes of his there was that hint of disorientation that will give eyes the appearance of being magnified and set a little astray.

Suddenly I knew he had done it. I knew it inside of me. It was a strange feeling, one that I could not explain. I could not see how he had done it, since he had not been there, and I could not see why he would have done it; but I simply knew in my bones that he had done it, and I did not speak. I was very very careful not to alter my expression in any way, for I knew that it could be dangerous for her in some way if he knew that I knew he had done it.

It all went through my head and my heart in perhaps a couple of seconds, and then I was thinking to myself that he was behaving very foolishly to act in such a hostile manner; I was thinking that if I were the guilty one, I would be very careful to act in a rational manner; but then I thought to myself that for a man to have been capable of such a horrible thing as striking a girl a blow like that, whether he intended to kill her or not, he would have to be in an unbalanced and irrational state.

My mind was working now as it did in combat; the camera of my mind was clicking at extra-high speed, geared so fast that it was able to synchronize with the speed of light, and therefore able to penetrate the minds of those about me so that it could not only think with my enemy, but also see behind those thoughts of my enemy, and know why he was thinking as he did and what he was going to think before he thought it himself. It is a strange sensation and can only be preserved for a short time before fatigue sets in, and the length of time of the combat is therefore of paramount importance. I did not wish to disturb this precious camera in any way, to jolt it out of synchronization by even the slightest flicker; and now I looked away from him for a moment and looked at Janet, and I saw that she was looking at Begg Holbrook her husband with an expression that was on the surface one of protective love, but was—unknown to her—a mask concealing a feeling inside her of considerable bafflement about him. And suddenly I realized that although Janet genuinely thought that she was in love with Begg Holbrook, actually she was not really in love with him at all.

She said: "Begg, darling, you should be sleeping. What disturbed you?"

He did not even answer her. He looked at her and asked: "What is he doing here?"

"Major Foraker came to try and help about Letty."

He turned to me, and I could see that he was not in the least afraid of me, of my hitting him again. His

eyes were bleak and brittle, and he said, still speaking to her as he was looking at me: "He wouldn't have come if he had not had something to hide; and now we know what it was."

I was careful to stand still and retain my silence and let her speak. She said: "But darling, I've just called up Captain Marford and listened to his voice, and that wasn't the voice I heard—I'm almost sure it wasn't the voice."

He waved his hand.

"You can't say such a thing. You said you weren't completely sure yourself. Voices change. It must have been one of them, either Marford or our friend here."

I still said nothing.

She said: "Why must it have been one of them?" She turned to me. "What was the other man's name—Sellick? Couldn't it have been him?"

This was news to Holbrook.

"Who is Sellick?" he asked her.

I said: "He was the only other man who received one of my necklaces: but you're right in thinking it was more likely to be one of us two, Marford or I, since I haven't seen Sellick in over two years. He and his voice can be checked too, if he doesn't account for his necklace."

"You gave his name to the police?"

"Yes."

"But you didn't give Marford's and nor did he."

"No."

He looked at her.

"Of course it must have been Marford." He nodded in my direction. "And he's protecting his buddy. And you're listening to him protecting the man who killed Letty. Give me that telephone."

I said: "Last night you were sure it was I who killed her."

He took the telephone from her as she handed it to him, and said to me, as he picked up the receiver: "I still haven't ruled you out, and I don't think the police have, either." He got the operator on the wire and said: "Get me police headquarters in Chanley Heights."

My thoughts were going fast. I was thinking what action I should take, and I was thinking what was in his mind, given that my hunch was right. Given that my hunch was right, then he would be thinking that here was an opportunity for a "fall guy," but there was more to it than that. What was it that made him so sure I would not suspect him? Of course he had a cast-iron alibi, the word of Stephen Farnum; but even so, he would not normally want me to start doubting it by behaving in any way suspiciously such as his present vengeful behavior now was. It must be because he felt extremely vengeful against the man that Letitia had been seeing; it must be that he was in love with Letitia, and the force of his jealousy which enabled him to kill her, would be the same force which would drive him to get the man whom Letitia had been seeing.

And then I suddenly saw something else too. I suddenly saw that, if he was in love with Letitia, then certainly Janet did not know this. Janet had just told me that Letitia had been in love with a man she could not marry. Janet had just told me that this man was in love with her, Janet. Janet had just told me that this was the reason why she knew this man could not be in love with Letitia. Janet had been talking about Begg Holbrook, her own husband, with whom she thought she was still in love, whom she thought still loved her, but who actually loved Letitia, whom he had killed out of insane jealousy because Letitia, in trying to escape from her horrible dilemma of being in love with her sister's husband, had been planning to marry someone else, anyone, just to cut the Gordian knot.

Janet had implied to me that it had not been Begg, her own husband, whom Letitia loved, but another man, in order to protect Letitia's memory. I could see it all now. And I could see, too, that I would have to tread very delicately indeed in order to extricate Janet from the situation. She believed that Letitia was in love with Begg, yes, but she could not believe that Begg was in love with Letitia. It would not occur to her that this would be possible, since she would naturally presume her husband to be in love with herself. And also she would believe that any love which he might seem to display toward Letitia would be simply the normal fondness and affection of a man for his wife's sister.

My thoughts had all been racing, racing ahead of me, ahead of everything, as I stood waiting for Begg Holbrook's call to be put through. I could see the whole thing with a horrible clarity. And I knew that it was essential for me to try to preserve that clarity for as long as it would take me to disprove Begg Holbrook's alibi and to make Janet see the truth. And not only just to make Janet see the truth, but to do it in such a way that when she saw it, she would be out of reach of Begg Holbrook.

He was saying: "I want to talk with Lieutenant Ives. It's urgent."

I waited. I looked at Janet. She was standing by Begg, and she was watching me to see what I was going to do. I sat down and took out a cigarette and lit it. I had to act two different parts at once. I had to act one part for Begg Holbrook, who knew I was not the killer, if my hunch was right. And I had to act another part for Janet, who had no definite proof that I was not either the killer himself or sheltering the killer. She seemed reassured by my action, and turned toward Begg again to listen to his conversation.

He said: "Ives—this is Begg Holbrook speaking. About those necklaces of Major Foraker's— It seems he gave one to Captain Marford. Yes, I just overheard him telling my wife. He said he couldn't tell you because it would look bad for Marford if he did. . . . Yes, he's here in the room now. . . . Just a moment."

He carried the telephone over to where I was sitting and handed me the instrument with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

I took the receiver and said hullo to Ives. The officer's voice was not at all pleasant.

He said: "This puts you in wrong with me, Foraker. You get right back to where you belong, and wait there for me. If Marford's there, say nothing. And I mean say *nothing*."

The receiver clicked suddenly with the slam from the other end. He certainly meant what he said. I got up.

"He told me to get back, so I'll go now." I looked at them both, thinking hard how to do it right for both of them.

Janet helped me without meaning to. She was standing with a puzzled expression back on her face again now, and she said: "Begg, I still don't think I made a mistake over either of their voices. I still think it was somebody else."

Begg said, his eyes on me: "Somebody else who had one of his necklaces who also knew her? How could it have been? You made a mistake, that's all, honey. It was either Marford or our friend here who was going to marry Letty."

He had said,"was going to marry." He hadn't said, "Who killed her." I don't think Janet noticed it. But I noticed it. And I knew that he was out to hang the

man who had been going to marry his Letitia. And I knew I should waste no time in getting back and warning Tom of his danger.

I turned on my heel and left the room.

Chapter Nine

WHEN I got back, I found Tom still at home. He was in the study, and the whole place was upside down. Books had been removed from the shelves and strewn haphazardly about the chairs and floor, the furniture was pulled about, and he was in his shirt-sleeves kneeling down behind the sofa in the corner of the room hunting for something on the floor.

He looked up as I came in, and I could see at once by his face that he had been having great trouble with himself.

I said: "What is it, Tom—what are you doing?"

Even when Tom was in the greatest distress, he still had his way of speaking in a steady tone.

He said: "I've hunted all over the whole of this damned house for that necklace, and I'm going to find it. Nothing else will convince her, and she says she is sure you didn't take it."

I said: "Tom, I made a bad mistake about you." I I thought a moment, thought of Ives on his way, of Elsa upstairs with the baby, Elsa crying with her child, hers and Tom's. I said: "Have you looked all over the house?"

He nodded—actually, he shook his head from side to side slowly in the way he would sometimes do, and I knew it was a nod, a nod of despondence.

He said: "I've combed the whole place—except the nursery because she's there, but I know she's looked there before, the day she lost it. In fact, we both did."

I could see in his face that he was beginning to crack a little at the memory of that, at the thought of his trouble with Elsa, and I tried to think fast of something concrete to stop it.

I said: "Say, Tom, if Elsa could see the necklace that Ives has, wouldn't she know if it was hers or not?"

That did it. For a moment he looked at me, blankly, and then he began to brighten up. "That's right, Foraker—of course she would. But—how can we do that? We've all said we didn't have one. We couldn't ask Ives to see it, or he'd get suspicious."

I wondered what to do, how to put it, remembering that Ives had told me to say nothing of his coming.

I said: "I'll call up Ives right now, and say that we have just remembered that one of my necklaces was given Elsa by a friend of mine before she met you, and she didn't know it was one of mine." I was just talking fast to think out what to say, saying the first things that came into my head, when the doorbell rang. Tom answered it. Ives and Wilson came in. They were looking tough.

Ives said: "Okay, now where's your necklace you denied having?"

He was looking at Tom, and Tom looked at me instantly in a bewildered and accusing way.

I said: "It was my fault, Tom—I thought you'd given it to her, just the way Elsa did."

"You mean you told them that?"

"It came out when I was talking to Janet Holbrook, and her husband overheard me—and he told these people."

Ives said: "Where is it?"

Tom lifted his hands, pointed around the room to show the shambles it was in.

"We've looked the house over, combed it."

Ives followed his arm round the room, looked back at him. He looked at me. He said: "I told you to say nothing."

"I didn't," I said. "This was happening before I got here."

"Why did you both deny having had one?"

Tom answered: "Because we each thought the other had given it to her."

Ives said nothing. Wilson said nothing. They both stood there, saying nothing better than most people can say it.

Tom said: "Why don't you show the necklace you've got to my wife? She would know at once if it was hers or not."

Wilson gave a short laugh, one short sound like the hollow rasping sound an old tin can might make if you threw it down the bottom of an empty well. He said: "He expects us to believe what she says. Now ain't that a dandy one?"

Ives paid no attention to Wilson. He was concentrating on the situation before him in the way that he always did, watching Tom's face very closely, taking in the shambles of the room; and I know he had not missed a word or a gesture made by either of us.

He said to Tom: "Your wife believes you gave Miss Lane her necklace, doesn't she?"

Tom nodded. "Yes."

"And it has caused trouble between you?"

This time Tom just nodded, and there was nothing left unsaid in that nod.

"And she denied to me having a necklace because she thought you had given it to Miss Lane and wished to protect you?"

"Yes. But she didn't think I killed Miss Lane."

Ives said: "Did you give your necklace to Miss Lane?"

"No."

He said no more than that curt "No," just waited, his poise now quite recovered, or rather the mask of it.

Wilson said: "Looks like to me, Chief, we'd better take them both along to the station and find out some more." Wilson was always longing for his own ground, the ground of the bright lights in the little room in the station.

Ives started to say something, when the door opened, and there was Elsa. She showed surprise to see so many people in the room; clearly she had come down to speak to Tom, and had expected to find him alone.

Tom said: "Come in, Elsa. Let me introduce Lieutenant Ives and Sergeant Wilson. We're all having a little get-together here about your necklace."

SHE LOOKED AROUND at us all, then back to Tom. She went up to him, said in a quick little voice: "Tom, you must come—you must come up to the nursery at once." She looked around at Ives and said: "And I think you'd better come too, Lieutenant; I think you'll find this important."

Ives was frankly puzzled—we were all puzzled, for that matter. But Elsa didn't wait, she turned and led the way out of the room, and there was something in the way that she did it, an air of authority, or rather of certainty that we would all follow, which made us do so. It was a very strange thing, the way all four of us just followed Elsa up the stairs without anyone saying a word, not even Wilson. Tom went first, and Ives was behind Tom, and Wilson was behind me; and as we went up, I could hear Wilson muttering something to himself half under his breath, but I wasn't paying much attention because my mind was focused upon what Elsa wanted us to see. She held up her hand as we got to the open door of the nursery and put her finger to her lips, and Ives actually went on tiptoe to the door—in fact, we all went on tiptoe to the door oked in. I looked over Tom and Ives' shoulders as they stood in the doorway next to Elsa, and Wilson stood beside me craning his neck to see.

Peter Marford had climbed on a high stool, and he was playing with a brooch of Elsa's that he had evidently

just taken from the dressing-table which she had in the nursery. He did not see any of us as we watched him, and after playing with the brooch for a while and holding it up in his hands and cooing a little over it, he started to climb down with the brooch firmly clasped in his right hand. Somehow, more by luck than anything else it seemed to me, he made it down to the floor. Then he started across the room with it.

You could see he had a purpose. I think all of us could see that he had a purpose in his little mind. He crossed the floor to the unit heating-ventilator in the wall, and then he solemnly started stuffing the brooch through one of the holes in the ventilator. Everyone waited while he tried to get the brooch through the hole. After a while he made it, gave it a final determined push and then listened intently. There was a clang as the brooch went down the heating shaft, and a broad smile came over little Peter's face, as he clapped his chubby hands together and gave a coo of delight. Then he turned and started back for the high stool again by the dressing-table.

Elsa went after him and picked him up in her arms and turned back to Tom and came up to him and put her hand on his arm. There were tears in her eyes, but she was smiling. She said: "He's done it before, of course."

Tom didn't say anything. He just put his hands on hers, and then after a moment he looked at little Peter, who was puckering ready to cry at the unexpected interruption of his game. Tom poked him in the belly, and then he said in the gruff tone he always put on to his son: "Cute little kleptomaniac, you."

Elsa turned to Ives.

"That's where I last put the necklace, on that dressing-table. That must have been the first time he did it. Now today he's done it twice again. You saw the last time yourself."

Ives just nodded. He turned to Wilson.

"Have that shaft checked, and see if the necklace is there or not."

Wilson didn't like that at all. But there wasn't anything he could do about it. It was obvious enough that it must be there, obvious enough even to Wilson. He was starting off down the stairs to the servants' quarters when I stopped him.

"Wait," I said. "That's one of those ventilators with a handle. There's a ratchet inside, and there's just a chance you won't need to check the shaft. Give me a flashlight, Tom."

Ives didn't say anything. Nobody said anything; they just waited while Tom got the flashlight and I examined the ventilator. You couldn't see inside because it was dark and on the same side of the room as the window, so that the light did not stream into it, but when Tom brought me the flashlight, I flashed it inside the open ventilator, and it showed the ratchet stretched across the middle of the opening of the shaft, and it showed something else too: it showed a cowrie-shell necklace caught on the ratchet and dangling down the mouth of the shaft. You could see it quite plainly in the light from the flashlight; Tom and Elsa could see it, and Ives and Wilson could see it too.

Wilson looked at Ives.

"How do we know he didn't just plant it there?" he suggested.

I said: "And trained the baby, too, Wilson?"

Wilson turned on his most hostile look. He took a little book from his pocket and opened it as he looked at me.

"Okay, Major, this may let your friend here out, but it doesn't let you out yet. No sir!" He checked down a list in his book and said: "This guy Sellick, George Sellick, we're having trouble tracing him. Where did you last see him?"

He did not see us as we watched him.

"I told you," I said, "I haven't seen him since he left the Marines over two years ago. Is his the only necklace you've left untraced?"

Tom was staring at Wilson and me.

"George Sellick—" he said. He turned to me. "But you didn't give that fellow one of your necklaces, did you, Foraker—George Sellick?"

"Matter of fact, I did—he asked for one, and I felt sorry for him. Why?"

I could see there was something in Tom's face: he was looking utterly taken aback.

"George Sellick!" he said. "*That's* who she was seeing, then." He was speaking more to himself than to us. He came out of it and said to me. "George Sellick came to see me at the studio just over two weeks ago, or somewhere round then. He brought the manuscript of a novel he'd just finished. I saw him in my office. I never cared for him much, so I just said I would read it and got rid of him by asking my assistant to show him around the studio and take him down onto the set. He must have met Letitia there. And I've never seen him since. What's more, I've tried to see him, because we all like the novel and want to buy it. I made an appointment to lunch with him at the Etruria where he was staying, but he didn't show up. And that was the day she was killed. I know that, because that was what put all thoughts of work out of my mind, so that I've never thought to follow up on him since. Naturally I never connected the two, because I had no idea that of all people you would have given him one of your precious necklaces. In fact, I didn't even think to mention to you I'd seen him."

Ives said to Wilson: "Get the Etruria on the phone and check up."

Wilson didn't need to be told. He was already making for the upstairs extension which stood on an occasional table in the passage, just outside the door.

Ives said: "What kind of man is this Sellick?"

Chapter Ten

I WAITED for Tom to answer Ives' question, because he had seen George Sellick recently, and I had not. I remembered him as a man who was moody and kept aloof for much of the time. It had never occurred to me to think of him as a writer; but directly Tom had said that he was one, the thing seemed to click, it made complete sense somehow, thinking of George Sellick as a writer, and even as a good writer at that. And it also made sense, and a great deal of sense, in thinking of George Sellick as a possible killer. All of us had been killing for a while, anyway.

I could not quite understand the turn my thoughts had taken as I listened to Tom telling Ives about Sellick, and Elsa quieting the baby, who had started to cry, and

Wilson outside on the telephone talking to the desk at the Etruria.

The idea of Letitia and George Sellick being linked together was a strange and new one to me. It changed my concept of Letitia from what it had been earlier. Perhaps my concept of Letitia had already changed a bit since my meeting with Janet, her living sister; but now the idea of Letitia with George Sellick—that did change Letitia in my mind a little more. George Sellick was certainly not to be classified as a run-of-the-mill male. And for Letitia to associate herself with someone as strange as Sellick was surely a comment upon her own state of unbalance.

NOW, ON TOP OF MY THOUGHTS about Letitia's character, I heard Tom saying something to Ives which was making Elsa look closely at him again, and it made me do the same thing too, for he distinctly implied that he and Letitia had seen each other again after their scene in the car on the avenue when he had advised her against marrying the man who now turned out to be George Sellick. Before, he had always maintained he had never seen her again. But now he said that she had told him that she had taken his advice and was not going to go through with the marriage, and was going to tell her friend that at the earliest opportunity.

"When did she tell you that?" Ives snapped at Tom instantly.

Tom said slowly: "She told me that when I saw her the day before she was killed."

"Why didn't you tell me that before when I was questioning you?"

Tom looked across at Elsa. She was standing waiting. He turned back to Ives and said: "Because I didn't wish it to become known, naturally. However, since it now has to come out, I might as well come out with the whole thing."

"You certainly might as well," Ives said.

Tom started to talk again, and I know he was talking to Elsa as much as he was to Ives. It was a strange situation; in a way it made me feel I shouldn't have been there. Certainly I was very glad for Tom and Elsa's sake that Wilson was still outside telephoning. I thought that I would stay, because Tom had also lied to me about not having seen Letitia again. The only conclusion I could come to from his having done that in private with me was that he feared that even I might tell Elsa, and that hurt a little. Surely Tom could not think that I could ever do anything against him to Elsa, not unless perhaps he should have been thinking that Elsa's affection for me was more than it should have been.

The only other thing I could think of was that Tom had not told me because he might have thought that even I would suspect him of killing her if I had known that he was overly mixed-up with her emotionally. And as I listened to him talking now to Ives, it gradually came out that he had been more involved with Letitia than he had formerly admitted. It seemed that he had heard from her by telephone that day—it was she who had called him, and she had asked to see him concerning the matter they had been discussing. Tom had agreed to meet her—he made no excuses for himself over this as he was talking. I liked him for that, and I think that Elsa did too—at least that was the impression that I got as she was standing there listening to him while holding the baby in her arms. He said that then it was mutually arranged between them that they meet somewhere quiet, and he had agreed to see her in a small restaurant where they would be unlikely to see anybody that they knew, and away from the eyes of columnists. He could not have seen her at the studio, since people knew she had left the picture. When he met her, he could see at once that she was still looking wrought up, though not in such a bad state as she had been before. They had had lunch together and she had told him then that she had decided to take his advice and refuse to go through with her prospective marriage when next she met her date. Then she had asked him what did he think she should do about her life to take the place of this marriage. He had asked her once again what was the problem which was so upsetting to her, but she had still refused to tell him. She said she felt that she would have to concentrate harder now upon her work, and asked him to do what he could for her, in spite of the way she had previously let him down. He had said he would do what he could. He said that he was glad that she had come to such a sensible conclusion. He had asked her again to tell him her problem, but she had again repeated that she could not tell him yet, but that perhaps later on when they knew each other better, she might be able to talk more about the matter. It was at that point that he had suggested that they should meet again at some future time after she had told her man that she would not marry him. A date was thereupon arranged between them for the following week. That, Tom said, was all that had transpired between them. The following day he heard that she had been killed.

Ives said: "This is all very interesting, Captain Marford. Tell me, before we go any further, was Miss Lane aware that you were a married man?"

"I don't know," Tom said. "The question didn't come up."

"You didn't bring it in anywhere?"

"No—after all, I have been her director for some time, and I presumed she would know I was married in the same way that anyone else on the lot would probably know if they've been there some time."

"I see. Then you presumed that she knew?"

"I suppose I did, if you put it that way." Tom went on. "And it's just because I knew you would put it that way, that I didn't tell you this before."

Ives said: "Withholding evidence in a murder case is pretty serious, Captain Marford. The fact you did so suggests I am right in putting it that way."

Tom shrugged. He said: "All right, perhaps you were." And then he looked straight across at Elsa. I could see how straight he looked at her, and I could also see how straight she looked back at him. And it was kind of nice. Seeing my two friends looking at each other like that gave me a good feeling, because I could see that they were looking at each other with a great deal of understanding, the understanding that is in some marriages. And then Elsa put out her tongue at him, very quickly so that Ives shouldn't see, and Tom gave a quick smile and turned back to Ives, who was already started on his next question.

"And you mean to tell me, Captain Marford, that you did not see Miss Lane again?"

"How could I have? That evening I was home for dinner, and she was killed the following afternoon."

IVES WAS REALLY getting tough now.

He said: "And where were you then? You were not on the lot. You said you went shopping just at that time."

"I know I did. As a matter of fact, I went to the Etruria to try and find George Sellick. He had cut his lunch appointment at the studio with me. We were, and still are, most anxious to buy the picture rights to his book before anyone else gets wind of it. That is why I kept quiet about it and said I went shopping. At that time I saw no possible connection between Sellick and Miss Lane, as I have already explained. It so happened then that at the time you mention I was in the Etruria, where I had gone personally to try to find out what had become of him."

Wilson had just come back into the room and he said:

"That's right, Chief. I just got all the dope and Marford was there as he says."

Ives turned to Wilson.

"What did you find out about Sellick?"

WILSON HAD A NOTEBOOK in his hand. He started to read it.

"He left the hotel without checking out, Thursday, the day she was killed. Last seen early Thursday morning by a bellboy, Sam Keeler, who says he saw him buy a paper at the stand. He was wearing, as far as the boy can remember, gray flannel pants and brown sports jacket. Hotel wrote to the address he gave, and so far has received no reply. That was yesterday, Friday. Address given was Hotel Pierre, New York. No time for reply before early in the week, after which, if unfavorable, they would have checked with us, usual routine. Description as follows: Six feet tall, gray eyes, black hair, weight one hundred fifty pounds, distinguishing marks, none. He left all his luggage at the hotel. There was no means of telling from it where he might have gone. Packing had not been done; clothes were left around, bed had been slept in as usual. All papers left at the desk, sealed, including typescript of a book. Papers were opened on my instructions and are as follows: Two movie stubs for the Fox—I've checked the numbers and they say at the theater they were issued on Friday 12th, four days ago. One Biltmore Theater program, 'The Hasty Heart,' and one receipt from the Tovarich Shoe Store for nine dollars fifty-seven cents—I've checked on that, and they have a record of selling a pair men's brown leather shoes, size ten, corresponding to that price; but the salesman who sold him is on his vacation up in Oregon for two weeks and no one there remembers the customer. Then there's a stub for the tennis matches at the Los Angeles Tennis Club dated Saturday the 13th, just the one stub. I've checked there, but they can't remember who bought the ticket; it's one out of hundreds in the public stands. Those and the manuscript of the book are all the papers found."

Ives said, "Have you instituted the check on exits?"

"All taken care of. Air, rail and highway."

Ives nodded. He was thinking, and thinking fast.

He said: "We'd better make sure he did meet her. Have you checked with the Holbrooks on the name, any possible clue?"

"No sir."

"Have them come around here at once. Both of them. I want to talk to them."

"Yes sir."

Wilson left the room, and Ives turned to Tom.

"And you check with your assistant at the studio and see if he introduced them or not—Sellick and the Lane girl."

Tom nodded, and Elsa said: "If you're going to use my house as a police station, I'd like it if you could use some room other than the nursery."

Ives apologized. He and I went downstairs, leaving Tom with Wilson at the telephone. I was thinking that if Sellick had done it, then that let Begg Holbrook out. It certainly looked like Sellick, the way he had run out.

"That Stephen Farnum," I asked Ives. "He's a man of good repute, isn't he?"

Ives looked at me.

"In his business he has to be." His voice was a little dry. "Big attorneys don't tell the police that people are at their house when they're not, Major, not even if they're clients of theirs." He gave a chuckle, a deep, pleasant little chuckle. "You don't like Holbrook, do you?"

I saw it was no use going on about it. I couldn't tell Ives what I had figured out about the Holbrook family. And if Ives was satisfied with his check on the Farnum alibi, then I should be too.

I said: "I guess it was Sellick, at that."

Ives said: "What kind of man was he at the time you knew him—I mean, how was he in a crisis?"

"Erratic. Yes, he was erratic. He could be more wonderful than anybody, but he could be just the opposite. You never knew which he'd be."

Wilson came down.

"The Holbrooks will be right over. Guess I'd better get over to the hotel and come back."

Ives nodded. "And get his picture from the Marines." Wilson went out, and Ives turned to me. "Do you happen to have any pictures?"

"No," I said. "I never took any pictures through the war."

Ives looked at me. "That's strange," he said, "especially for a man who likes it enough to stay in."

I don't know why but I began to feel mad at that remark. I was just going to say what I thought of it, when Tom came in and Ives asked him if he had any pictures.

Tom said: "Yes, I have some around some place. I'll look them up for you. My assistant says he did not introduce Sellick and Lane, and he didn't see them talking together, although he remembers she was there that day. I've checked with several people, and no one can remember Lane talking with Sellick except that the cop on the gate thinks he remembers seeing them going out together, but he's very vague about it. It's pretty well impossible to expect a man to remember a thing like that with so many people going through."

Ives nodded. Tom went over to Elsa's desk in the corner of the room and opened a couple of drawers and hunted through them. After a while he took out a package of letters in a rubber band. He flipped off the elastic and went through the letters, and took some snapshots out of one of the envelopes.

"Here are some of Guam I sent Elsa. I think there's one—" he was looking through the pictures, and I went over and looked at them over his shoulder, and it all came back to me in a rush, those days at Guam. There was a picture of Tom and me with our arms around each other's shoulders standing beside a tree-trunk in the bright white sunlight with the ocean in the background, and lying on the sand beside us was a piece of two-by-four and some bamboo and a couple of empty gasoline cans and a severed head of hibiscus. There was a picture of some planes on a strip with Foraker in the foreground in a pair of swimming-trunks, standing on his head and putting his tongue out at the camera. There was a picture of seven men in flight jackets snapped as they were standing waiting for something, and I was one of them and I couldn't remember what we were waiting for. There were the seven of us in the group, and my eye ran over them all; there was Tom and me and Joe Carson, who was shot down over Tokyo; and the Kid from Spain, his name was something ending in *owski*, but no one could ever remember it, so we called him that because he looked a little bit like Eddie Cantor; and there were the two Pickerson brothers and George Sellick. You could see George's features very clearly in the picture, and you could see the way he held his head; in anybody else it would have been an arrogant tilt to it, but in George Sellick it was just kind of awkward, what you might call his touch-me-not tilt.

TOM GAVE THE PICTURE to Ives, pointing out Sellick.

"There," he said. "You can see him pretty well in this."

Ives looked at it a moment and nodded.

"Mind if I keep it awhile? I'll have it copied and return it."

I kissed her hard right full on her mouth.

Tom said all right, and Ives put the picture in his pocket. Tom went to put the other pictures back in the envelope. He put the envelope back among the other envelopes in exactly the same place where it had been before; and just as he was shutting the desk the front doorbell rang, and I knew it would be Janet and Begg Holbrook.

Chapter Eleven

JANET had on a black suit and a deep blue sweater that exactly matched the deep blue of her eyes. She saw me directly she came in. He was right beside her; and all at once it came into my head that maybe all that stuff I had been thinking about him was wishful thinking, to free her for me. I thought of what Ives had said about my not liking him, and about Farnum. It occurred to me now for the first time that if Begg was guilty, then Farnum must be too, because Farnum had given Begg a perfect alibi, by saying he was at his house and with him at the time of Letty's death, and the idea of the eminent Stephen Farnum being involved in it was like the idea of the President being involved in it.

But I still didn't like him. He and Janet were standing there close together, a married couple. He had on a suit now, and he had shaved and looked presentable for a change. He looked too presentable, in fact.

He saw me and didn't like it. I hadn't forgotten my hitting him, but he didn't say anything. He was waiting to see what Ives had to say.

Then Elsa came in. I wondered why Elsa had come down, but then I saw her eyes go instantly to Janet, and I remembered of course that Janet was the twin sister of the woman Tom had been out with; and I looked at Tom and saw Tom was looking at Janet too, and I wondered if he was feeling as startled as I had been, the time I had first set eyes on the twin sister of Letitia.

Somebody had to introduce people, and I saw that there wasn't anybody else to do it except Foraker.

I said: "Elsa, this is Mr. and Mrs. Holbrook . . . Mrs. Marford, Mr. Marford."

They all kind of bowed to each other in the way people do, and then Elsa said: "What about a drink?"

You could see nobody particularly wanted a drink except Begg Holbrook—he was the type that never refused one. So then Janet changed her mind and said maybe she would have one too, and Tom had to have one to keep them company. Ives refused. He was waiting for all these preliminaries to be over before he carried the ball.

Ives said: "Tell me, Mrs. Holbrook, did your sister ever say she had been to the theater in the past week or so? The name of the play is 'The Hasty Heart.'"

Janet thought a moment and then looked at Begg, and they both looked at each other blankly.

"No," she said, "she never said anything to me about it. She might have been, for all I know. We never saw much of her, even though she was living with us." She was still thinking hard, you could see. She said slowly: "We were talking about acting one morning, I remember—about a week ago. She was saying something about giving it up, and how when you see someone give a good performance it makes you despair of ever doing anything really good yourself. She mentioned some actor's name, but I can't remember it now. She didn't say if she had just seen him, or if she was referring to someone she had seen some time ago; but I imagine that probably she had only just seen him." She looked at Ives. "Can you tell me the names of the people in the cast, and I might remember if it was one of them?"

Ives, for once, looked helpless.

I said: "I saw it. Could the actor have been Whitner Bissell?"

She looked at me.

"That was it. Yes, that was the name, Whitner Bissell."

Then they were all looking at me, and I saw what I had done.

I said: "No, I wasn't there with her."

Begg Holbrook said: "Who *were* you with, then?"

I looked at him and I said: "I was there by myself."

Ives checked it. He knew about Sellick and they didn't. He had some more questions for them first.

He said: "Did she go to the movies much?"

Janet shook her head. "Hardly at all nowadays. You know how poor they've been lately. She saw 'Henry V' twice I think."

Ives said: "How about tennis? Do you know if she went to the recent tennis matches at the Tennis Club?"

Janet said: "Yes, I know she did that. I was rather surprised, because she didn't usually do that."

"Do you know what day or days she went?"

Janet thought a moment.

"I can't remember. She said something about a man who made an impossible shot with two hands."

Tom said: "That was Segura, the day of the finals." He looked at Elsa. "Remember?"

Elsa nodded. "That's right. That was the day of his ticket too," she told Ives. "Sunday." She looked at Tom again. "They must have been there the same day we were!"

"Could be—I didn't see them, but in a big crowd like that—"

I said: "But there was only the one stub."

Tom said: "You know how it is. People keep their stubs for going in and out. He may have given her hers."

Janet said: "Who? Who are you talking about?"

Ives said: "A man called Sellick—George Sellick."

HE TOLD THEM ABOUT SELLICK, how Sellick had been to see Tom, and about the novel, and his leaving the hotel and everything. They stood there listening intently. They seemed to be going right along with him, until he reached one point. It was when he said something about Letty's having seen Tom and telling him she had turned Sellick down, or rather that she was about to turn him down. And then I happened to be looking at Begg, and I saw, quite unmistakably, that this news was a complete surprise to him. And there was more to it than just plain surprise. There was hurt there too. There was shock there. There was something pretty deep.

And then I thought to myself that supposing, supposing he had somehow, despite the Farnum alibi, killed her—killed her out of jealousy at the idea of her being about to marry someone, *not knowing that she had*

already turned him down and not giving her a chance to tell him so, then that would exactly account for his present reaction. That he had, in other words, killed her to no purpose.

I looked at Janet as Ives went on talking about Sellick. She was standing there intent upon every word of Ives', intent upon the discovery that at last the killer of her sister had been identified. Letitia's decision to refuse Sellick, as told by her to Tom, only served to confirm in her mind, as it did in everybody else's except mine and, I presumed Begg's, that Sellick had obviously killed Letitia out of his own frustration.

WHETHER IT WAS TO COVER his reaction, or whether because he truly could not bring himself to believe Letitia had made such a definite decision, Begg at that point interrupted Ives to ask how it was that this matter had only just come to light, and why, if such were the case, had Tom not brought it up before.

Tom answered him. He said that he had not brought it up before because he had not thought it made too much difference anyway, for he had thought all along that she would follow his advice and refuse Sellick, whom she was only marrying to escape some problem of her own. Begg asked him if she had not told him what her problem was, and Tom said no, but that he thought she might have told him later on.

I looked at Janet, again. I knew her eyes were on me. At mention of Letitia's problem, Janet's eyes had been drawn to me as though by a magnet, and I knew she wished to see whether I had said anything to Ives about her sister's private tragedy or not, about the "man whom Letitia loved who loved Janet," as she had put it to me.

I said, in a speculative kind of way, as we looked at each other, that I wondered what Letitia's problem could have been. I thought that by saying that, it would reassure Janet that I had not said anything against Letitia to Ives. But in a sense the remark was unfortunate, because at that point Elsa said that there probably wasn't any problem at all, but that it was a good line to intrigue a nice person like Tom, her director, and get on good terms with him in that way.

Janet, of course, was furious. But she couldn't do much about it. She had already lied to Ives about her ignorance of any problem of Letty's, so she couldn't draw back there. Yet at the same time she was put by Elsa in the position of defending her dead twin sister's reputation. The color came into her cheeks and she stood there looking more attractive than ever, as she turned on Elsa and told her that that was no way to speak of her dead sister.

Ives cut in. You could see he didn't want to waste any more time. He wanted to catch Sellick. The fact Letitia was intending to refuse Sellick was to Ives the only important fact as far as he was concerned, and he said so. That fact gave Sellick his motivation for killing Letitia, and the fact that he had fled and so far remained in hiding even after the news of her death had been published in the papers, strongly suggested that he was the person who killed her.

Tom said that he thought it suggested more than that. He said that he thought that if Sellick had been so much in love with Letitia as to kill her for turning him down, then in that case he would not be at all surprised to find Sellick had committed suicide. He said Sellick was the sort of man who would inevitably feel tremendous, overpowering remorse for a deed like that.

Ives was interested. We all were. I did not see how Tom based such an opinion as that, but I realized he had seen Sellick since I had and knew him better. Tom told Ives he based his opinion on Sellick's novel. Ives asked him what it was about, and Tom gave him a brief outline of the book. It was the story of a man who had been in a state of mental strain after the war, who had developed a case of bad neurosis necessitating a form of shock treatment electrically administered to the brain, changing the thought-paths back to their normal channels and removing the obsession in this way. In Sellick's book the patient did not recover, however, and ended up a suicide. The title of the novel, "Pool of Silence," indicated the last haven of the human spirit, death.

Ives was noncommittal now; you could see that he was mainly concerned in Sellick's whereabouts and not in this kind of speculation as to his fate, and it was a good thing that Wilson came back just then with the material he had collected from the hotel. He had the papers that had been mentioned—the theater program and the other ticket-stubs and the carbon typescript of the novel, but still no clues at all as to where Sellick might have gone.

Ives picked up the telephone and called his office to find if there were any reports in yet from his cordon people. While he was waiting for a reply, he handed Sellick's picture to the Holbrooks and asked them if they had ever seen him. They both said no, they had not. They had not seen any of Letitia's escorts of late . . . The reply came back from the police that so far nothing had come up, and Ives put down the telephone. He picked up all the papers that Wilson had brought and started idly riffling through the pages of typescript to cover his thinking. He put the pages down again and looked up at Tom.

"What did you say the title of this book was?"

Tom said: " 'Pool of Silence.' "

"This one's called 'Crystal Lake.' " Ives tapped the pages of typescript. "You sure this is the same book?"

Tom went over and looked at the title page, then at some of the other pages, and looked at Ives.

"That's funny," he said. "He changed the title since he brought it to me that first day. I wonder what made him do that. 'Crystal Lake!' Same idea of course—not so good, though."

Janet said: " 'Crystal Lake.' " She turned to Begg. "Why, that's the name of the place you went fishing with Bill Burnette, when I went to New York, isn't it? That beautiful lake in the high mountains that you sent me the pictures of?"

BEGG HOLBROOK NODDED. His face seemed to me a little more tense than before, and he said: "That's right. Maybe Sellick's been up there too—sort of place any writer or artist would like."

Wilson said to Ives: "It's up in the Mammoth Lakes in the High Sierras north of Bishop. I was fishing there myself once. Sure is beautiful country."

Janet said: "That's an odd thing. That's an odd thing."

We all looked at Janet. She was standing there with the same look on her face as she had had once before when I was with her and she had been thinking about Letitia. That same look of inwardness and studying of herself in a mirror.

She said: "It was Letty who told him about that place. He was an Easterner, wasn't he? He wouldn't have been there himself. He had only just arrived in California, hadn't he?"

She was looking at Ives, and Ives just nodded, not wanting to break the current of her thoughts. She went on: "Then that's it. He must have shown his book to Letty, and she must have told him about that place, with its Pool of Silence. It looks like that."

Begg said: "But Letty had never been there."

She looked at Begg.

"I know that. But one day I was showing her the pictures you sent me, and we were saying what a wonderful place it looked, and I'm quite sure they made a deep impression on her. I knew Letty pretty well. We

were quite alike in a lot of ways, and they made an impression on me, those pictures, and I think they made much more of one on her; I remember noticing it at the time. And when I started to kid her a little about getting in one of her actress moods, she said no more about it, and I got the impression I had hurt her a little. I told her I was sorry and I was only kidding, and she said: 'For goodness' sake, sis, forget it—it's just the pictures reminded me of a movie I worked in once, and there was someone I didn't tell you about.' We didn't say any more about it, but I didn't believe that about the movie, I think it was the pictures themselves that brought on one of those moods of hers—she had been getting more and more like that in the past year or so."

JANET STOPPED TALKING, and there was silence in the room for a moment. Then Ives said gently: "And you mean, then, that you think Sellick perhaps showed her his book and it brought up the memory of the place she had seen in the pictures and so she told him about the place and he changed the title? Isn't that a little far-fetched, don't you think?"

Janet shrugged. "I don't think so, but I can see you might. You see, you didn't know Letty, and I did. If he was in love with Letty, he would certainly have changed the title to the one she told him about—can't you see, Lieutenant Ives?"

It was Ives' turn now to shrug.

"That may be, just as you say," he said, "but my job is to find this man, and it doesn't help me to do that."

Janet was looking at him.

Her eyes were wide and a stray lock of hair had come down across her nose and as she spoke she blew it out of the way without taking time to touch it with her fingers, she was that concentrated upon what she was saying that she probably didn't even know she had blown at her lock of hair or else maybe it was a trick of hers but that I couldn't tell because I hadn't known her long enough.

She said: "But of course it does help you, of course it does. Can't you see that that's where he is, Crystal Lake, that's where he's gone now?"

Ives looked at her. We all looked at her.

Ives said: "What do you mean?"

"I mean that that's where he's gone to kill himself. By the Pool of Silence."

Ives wasn't taking that. He said: "My dear Mrs. Holbrook—"

Janet cut in.

"Then call up and see. Check up and see if he hasn't gone there. Of course he has. Where else would he go after he killed Letty? Where else? And when he gets there, he'll be so remorseful he'll kill himself."

Wilson said, in the silence that followed, "Maybe there's no harm in checking, even if it does sound screwy? I'm getting sick of chasing leads to this guy and finding none. What do you say?"

Ives stood thinking, shrugged and said: "Try it, then. You know the territory you said?"

Wilson nodded, picked up the telephone. We all stood round, waiting and waiting. Finally he got the Mammoth Lakes district station and even from where I was standing I could hear the rasping tones of the man at Mammoth when he said that a man answering the description had packed in to the country back of Crystal early that morning. He had gone by himself without guides, taking two animals with him and food for seven days.

Ives had Wilson organize an immediate search party up there for Sellick. He made arrangements to get up there himself by air to Bishop. He told the rest of us that we could consider ourselves free to go and come as we chose, providing we were on hand for the inquest, to be held upon his return.

The Holbrooks wanted to go up with him. They wanted to be in at the kill. They wanted to see to it that there should be no suicide. Janet said that nothing would stop her from going up and doing whatever she could to assist, in any way she possibly could.

Ives assured her that there was nothing that she could do except that she might be able to remember Sellick's voice as being the one she had heard saying good-night to Letitia; but for that matter, she could do that on their return, and that he was going up in his own plane—it seemed that flying was Ives' hobby—which would only take two people.

Begg Holbrook supported Ives, at the same time pleading with him to let him accompany Ives in the plane. Janet and Begg had quite an argument over the matter, Janet saying that she would go up by herself if Begg went with Ives. Ives put a stop to it by saying that he was now going, and if Begg wished to come along, he could. As they left, Janet was still in a high-strung state. I wondered why Begg Holbrook was so anxious to get up there, whether it truly was that he was so deeply concerned as to the capture of Sellick alive, or whether perhaps the suicide angle might not perhaps be playing right into his hands, whether perhaps it might not be exceedingly convenient for him if Sellick were found dead rather than alive, and innocent. And I realized for the first time since I had heard of Sellick's whereabouts that if he were innocent, if he had simply left after Letitia had turned him down and gone up there to solace himself, knowing nothing of her subsequent death, that he might easily know nothing of it, because he would very conceivably not have seen a newspaper since he had arrived in that country. And then, if Begg could reach him before Ives, the suicide might be there, a reality, for Ives to find later, a dead body unable to speak, his lips forever sealed.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I GOT into my car and drove around a bit and tried to make up my mind what to do next. I found that while I had been thinking I had unconsciously driven down the Holbrooks' street. I was passing the house. Janet came out of the door with a suitcase and walked toward a car parked in the driveway. There was no one in the car, and she was alone. I slowed my car and parked it by the curb and got out and walked across the lawn toward her.

She looked up and saw me, and was surprised. She stopped and waited for me to come up, and I could not tell whether she was pleased or annoyed or indifferent. She was wearing blue jeans now and a colored wool shirt and a mountain jacket, and a beret on her head. I said: "Has he gone with Ives?"

She nodded.

"And I'm going right up myself. Did you wish to see me about something?"

"Yes," I said. "I did." I walked up to her and took her suitcase from her before she realized what I was going to do. I started toward my car, and she said: "What are you doing?"

"We'll go in Tom's Cadillac. We can do it in five hours if we're lucky. Maybe we can get a plane on the way and save some more time."

She said: "You mean you're proposing to drive me up there?"

I kept on walking toward my car, and now she was walking along beside me because she had to. She was still in something of a mood, and I did not want any trouble. I said: "You must have someone drive you. All that way. Think if you get a flat in the desert or something."

We reached the car, and I put the suitcase in the back seat, and held the front door open for her to get in.

I could feel she was appreciative—had been worried about such a drive by herself, and that she welcomed the idea of a protector.

She said: "You know, Major, that's very nice of you. But are you sure you want to do it? Isn't it putting you out an awful lot?"

I said: "Why don't you just get in? And stop thinking about things like that. I want to do it. Truly."

She looked at me a moment, and then she got in the car without saying any more.

WE DROVE ALL THE WAY up the pass through the mountains without saying anything. The light was fading now, and there was quite a sunset. It did not have the grandeur and all the color of a November sunset, but it was still a California sunset. I felt a strange peace. I felt somehow that for the first time in my life I was quite certain about what I was doing and what I wanted to do, and it was a good feeling.

When we reached the top of the pass the sun was almost gone, but the colors were getting better every minute, and the far-away hills on the opposite horizon across the valley were still bathed in a bright sunlight. The valley itself was very lovely, etched out in a sharp evening light that showed up the houses and the series of straight never-ending roads and made them stand right out at you.

She turned to me then and said: "I'm very grateful to you for not telling those men about what I said. I mean about Letty's trouble."

I looked at her. She was looking very sweet, her beret on the back of her head and that long hair of hers so glossy and well brushed, the ends curling up a little around the nape of her neck.

I said: "I'm glad you're glad."

Then I turned away again and concentrated on the long winding road down the hill. I was driving fast. You can go quite fast down that hill, and I wanted to make as much time as I could. I had an idea that I was going to help save George Sellick's life, and I wished to arrive up in Mammoth as soon as I could. But I was careful, I felt inside of me that sureness in my driving that comes perhaps of knowing just why you are driving fast. . . .

As I drove along, I started to tell her stories, any stories that came into my head. Stories about the war, stories about my childhood, the time when my brother was killed in the speedboat. I recalled the whole incident to her vividly, and she sat beside me listening very interestedly to it all, how he and I had stolen the boat, which belonged to a friend of my father's.

"We had taken a house for the summer on Chesapeake Bay. It was a late September afternoon and we were both feeling full of deviltry that afternoon, the way kids are, and we knew we would not be staying there much longer, and I said to Danny that it would be a fine idea to slip the Lawrences' boat from its moorings and ride around in it. He liked the idea very much, the kid did, but he was always more cautious than his elder brother, and he said did I think the Lawrences wouldn't hear the sound of the motor from their place. I told him that I had heard Mr. Lawrence tell Dad they were all going back to New York for a couple of days, something about the dentist, and I had thought up the idea of the speedboat at the time because it gave us an opportunity sent by the gods.

"Danny was all for it after that. We climbed aboard, and I took the tiller while Danny slipped the moorings from the bows, and I started the motor in the first try. It ran beautifully. I turned and headed out down the bay. It was a big, powerful boat, and I was only a kid of nine at the time, and I soon realized that I had taken on something harder than I had thought it would be, but I said nothing to Danny about it, because I knew the scared feeling would pass in a while when I got used to the handling.

"And pretty soon I was feeling fine and we were singing one of our pirate songs together, Danny sitting farther back in the boat now as I put the speed on and the bows came up higher out of the water. I started trying a mild turn, and after awhile I got bolder and pretty soon I was doing the real thing, sideslipping around at high speed and crossing our own wake. Danny and I were in the middle of the pirate song when it happened. The bouncing caused by crossing our wake at that speed and angle was too much for me, and I lost control of the rudder for a second. It was not for more than that, but it was long enough for the thing to happen. Danny was jerked clean out of the boat as she slewed, jerked hard into the water. I slowed at once, made my turn and came back to pick him up. I saw him bobbing in the wake, pulled alongside and yelled to him to hang on to the rail till I got to him. He didn't answer. I couldn't make out what had happened. I dived in and got him in my arms. He had broken his neck. He had broken his neck when he first hit the water. He was dead. Danny was dead. . . . Somehow I managed to get him and myself back into the boat, start the motor again and take him home. When I got to the jetty, I saw Dad. I don't know if he had seen what had happened way out in the bay there, or whether he had heard the sound of the Lawrences' motor or what; but he was standing there waiting on the jetty as I came in. I guess he saw Danny's body right away, for his face went white. I picked Danny up in my arms and held him in my arms while Dad moored the boat, fumbling with the rope because he hardly knew what he was doing. He helped me out of the boat with Danny still in my arms, and I looked at Dad and said: 'I killed him, Dad.' Dad never said a word. He just looked back at me for a moment, and then he put his hand on my shoulder. We took Danny home. My mother was not in when we arrived, and in fact I did not see her at all that evening, but later when she got back after I had gone to bed, I heard her crying; I heard her crying in the night.

"I did not stir from my room. I did not go to see her. She did not come to see me. In the morning she was not at breakfast, and Dad said that she was not feeling well and wanted to see me when I had finished eating. When I went to her room, she was in bed. She said, 'Good morning, Jim!' in the way she used to do, and I said, 'Good morning, Mum,' and stood in the doorway waiting. She told me to come in and shut the door. When I had done so she said: 'I want you to know, Jim, that neither Dad nor I will ever feel the slightest blame on you for what happened. I want you to know that, Jim.' I couldn't take it. I had been awake all night, and I hadn't cried once since Danny had broken his neck, but I couldn't take that. I knelt by her bed and cried my heart out while she stroked my hair, and I knew right then that it wasn't true, their not blaming me, and I guess I've known it ever since."

SHE DID NOT SAY ANYTHING when I had finished telling her. There was a silence between us. We were driving up a cañon now, we were about halfway through the cañon and the moon was up, and on our right as we sped along the highway I could see the gaunt, black charred hills that had evidently caught fire some time earlier in the year. The black charring made the hills look especially desolate in the moonlight as we drove along. Janet's face was looking a little drawn and white against the black hills, and I thought that I saw a tear upon her cheek as I turned my eyes back to the road again, and when I looked back at her once more, I could see that her shoulders were shaking a little and then I

thought to myself: "You stupid Foraker, why did you have to go and tell her that story, her of all people, when her sister is lying dead with a broken neck right this minute!"

And as if in echoing of my own thought, she turned to me then and said quietly: "Now I know why you picked Letty up and carried her to safety."

"I never thought of that until this minute. I never even gave it a thought, Janet." I put my right hand over her hands as she sat with them folded in her lap, and I said: "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have told you that story."

She said: "I don't know—I think I'm glad you did." She gave my hand a gentle squeeze, and then she got out her cigarettes and lit a couple and gave me one and settled back in her seat a little bit.

The car was cruising along around seventy to seventy-five, along the almost empty highway, and we had reached the last cuts in the hills before coming down to the approaches to the desert itself. The night wind was warm from the desert, warm and very dry, not at all like the damp air on the coast that we had by now left far behind us.

JANET STARTED TO TALK. She started to talk about herself and Letitia, her twin sister, how their lives had always been so bound up one with the other ever since the day they were born, until the day when she, Janet, had fallen in love with Begg Holbrook.

"I'll never forget that day," she said, "the day I first met Begg. Letty and I were staying with Uncle Stephen in Santa Barbara—we used to stay with him quite a bit after our parents died. That is Stephen Farnum, you know; he isn't really our uncle, but we always called him that—he had known us ever since we were little. Well, that evening we were going to a dinner party, and Letty wasn't feeling well—she had caught a cold and she was staying in bed, and I wasn't at all keen to go by myself because we always did everything together, and we would even feel ill together; and perhaps because of that I wasn't feeling too fine myself, but I knew it was one of those sympathy things, so I went because it had been promised. Begg was there. I suppose we fell for each other right away. And I thought to myself: 'My goodness, what am I going to say to Letty about this? What am I going to say to Letty when I get back?' I thought I'd best keep quiet about it awhile until I was really sure, and yet I wanted so much to talk it over with her because it seemed unnatural not to. In fact, I decided that she must meet him at once; after all maybe this wasn't really it, and anyway Letty should meet him, because she might fall for him herself. It was quite strange, the way I wanted Letty to meet him and yet also I didn't want Letty to meet him, both at the same time. And when I got home that night she was asleep, and I decided not to wake her up and I didn't tell her about Begg. I didn't tell her for several days, by which time Begg and I had seen quite a lot of each other; and then when I did tell Letty, I felt as though I had betrayed her. I know it sounds very melodramatic and perhaps it is, but that was how I felt.

"Begg and I were coming into the house across the garden at lunch-time, and Letty was up and had come downstairs for the first time since she had been ill. She came across the lawn to meet us, and I introduced them to each other. Of course I had told Begg that I had a twin sister, so he wasn't particularly surprised or anything, but I hadn't told Letty anything about Begg, and naturally it didn't take her long to feel that there was something between us; and I'll never forget the look in her eyes then, the look in her eyes when she realized that I had fallen in love. Of course no one else but me would have noticed it; but we were very close together, and we always knew what the other was feeling, because we always felt the same things together; and it was because of that that I also knew that she had fallen in love with Begg too.

"Naturally Begg didn't know this, and never did, but I always have known it. I don't mean she fell in love with him right away that afternoon, although it's always difficult to say about such a thing. Anyway, from then on, there was always that horrible barrier between us; we would both of us try to ignore it, but we both knew that it was always there, that the end of our life together had come, and that I was going to leave her to get married. Of course we had often discussed such a situation together from the time when we were kids; and sometimes we had laughed about it and said that of course we would both have to marry the same man; and at other times we would be more serious about it and wonder what it would really be like; and the solution we had thought of was that if one of us fell in love, the other would have to find someone for herself so that she wouldn't be alone. And that's just what Letty tried to do. But she couldn't. I knew just exactly what was happening, and why it was happening. She couldn't fall in love with anyone else, because she was in love with Begg. And as for me, I couldn't feel properly right about my marriage, with Letty feeling that way. And of course it affected Begg. He isn't the same person that he was then, and he knows it and I know it; but maybe Letty had to die, maybe now Begg will be all right again. Maybe Letty had to die—for us—maybe—she had to die—"

Janet was sobbing now, sobbing her heart out to me, there in the middle of the desert as we drove along.

I slowed the car down a little. Since we had been traveling on the desert floor I had kept the needle at around eighty-five miles, because owing to the cool night air I did not consider the danger of a blowout too great; but now I slowed ten miles because I wanted to concentrate on what I was saying and finish it before reaching Mojave, which was only around ten to fifteen minutes away, and I thought that we had better stop there for dinner to set her up.

"YOU KNOW, JANET," I SAID, "you know that there is a lot to consider about grief. I know what it is like to lose people, and I suppose nowadays we all know it; nowadays is an age of grief for the human race. But she wouldn't want you to feel that way; she wouldn't want it at all. It is much better that you feel happy for her: she is at peace. I'm not much good at saying this kind of thing, I'm afraid, but I'm trying to remember what a padre said to me once when I lost my best friend in New Guinea, and he said something to me like that: that we were the ones to feel sorry for because we were still living."

I knew I was talking a whole lot of platitudes, but what else I was to say in such a situation I did not know. It had a steadying effect on her, and it also served a purpose with me, a purpose of covering up what I was really thinking and working out how best to say. Janet's sobs were less violent now, and she was trying to control them altogether. She said: "I know you're right, I know that; but I can tell you this much: I'm not going to rest until we catch that man. I'm not going to rest until he's been executed. And I wish I could execute him myself."

I thought to myself surely it could not have been Begg Holbrook, I thought to myself how could she ever take such a thing if it was Begg Holbrook; and all the time I knew in my heart that somehow it must have been Begg Holbrook, and I said: "There is one thing I don't quite understand, and that is if you were in love with your husband, then how could any family tie affect that, if you were really strongly in love, I mean?"

She stared at me. She turned in her seat and I glanced at her and I saw that she had started to make up her face and she had not yet finished and she was holding the

make-up in her hand halfway to her face as she stared at me in amazement.

"Do you mean to say you don't think I'm in love with him?"

I looked away from her again; I kept my eyes carefully on the highway ahead and I said: "No, Janet, I don't think you are; and I very much doubt if you ever were as completely as you should have been, because if you had been, then it would have been so much stronger than your love for your sister that that wouldn't have interfered with your love for him."

I knew that it was pretty rough, to say a thing like that to a girl in her position, bereaved; but I felt that if my hunch about Holbrook was right, then it was better to give her a preparatory slap now so that it would not hit her all of a heap later on. But of course she would not hear of such a thing. She would not hear of it at all. And she got really mad in a good red-blooded way.

She said: "If that isn't the most pompous and conceited statement I've ever heard, I'd like to know what is. Just because you've fallen in love with me doesn't mean that I'm not in love with my husband, Major."

I felt my hand shake a little on the wheel.

"Whoever said I had fallen in love with you?"

She laughed, a mean kind of laugh.

"If you hadn't, you'd hardly be driving me all this way, would you?"

"If you," I said, "if you thought that, then you'd no business to let me drive you, and you wouldn't have done so if you hadn't wanted it."

"Certainly I wanted it. I want to get up there fast, and I knew you'd do a good job of looking after me."

"I see. You don't make yourself out very pretty, do you? You mean you take advantage of a man's feelings?"

"Major, are you admitting your feelings?"

I said: "There's plenty of reasons for my driving you—" but I couldn't finish the sentence. I couldn't tell her anything yet, about my hunch about Begg. I felt so mad though that I might have come out with something if it hadn't been for the freight-train whistling at me just outside Mojave. The road takes a sharp bend right there, and you have to slow to twenty miles to cross the tracks and the longest freight train I ever saw was on its way. I saw I would have to stop altogether and wait until it had gone by. I pulled up the car at the crossing as the first cars were going by, and then I saw that she was sitting there and laughing at me, and I pulled her across the seat toward me and I took her face in my hands and I kissed her hard right full on her mouth, and we stayed like that for a long time—stayed like that until the sound of the freight train had ceased. And when it had gone, we sat apart, and she made up her mouth, and I started the car again, and we drove down the main street of Mojave without saying a word, and I parked outside the café for dinner and we went into the café together.

Chapter Thirteen

THE café was crowded. I found an empty booth, the only one left, in a corner by the window. We sat down, and I ordered a couple of highballs, but she shook her head, saying she did not drink. When the waitress had gone, I said:

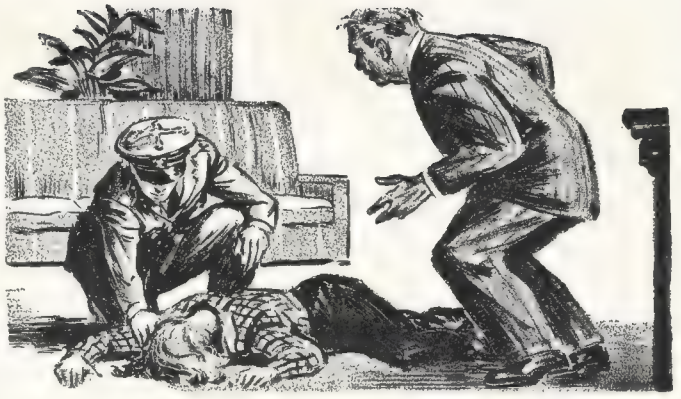
"You did this afternoon."

"That was just to keep Begg company."

She took out a cigarette and lit it before I could light it for her. I saw she did not wish to discuss the matter of drinking but I was determined to find out about it.

I lit my own cigarette and I said: "It's because of him you don't do it, isn't it?"

She gave a little frown and said: "I don't know what you mean."



Janet stared at him; then she slid to the floor.

I said: "Janet, look! You can talk with me. You can't go around with all that steam up, or you'll bust your boiler."

She said nothing, but there was an involuntary little quirk that came and went quickly at the corners of her mouth. The waitress came with my highball and she said: "All right, I'll change my mind this time."

I gave her my drink and she took a sip of it and leaned back in her seat and then she said, "You know, Jim, it's got pretty bad with him lately. Sometimes I wonder what's going to happen."

I said nothing, just waited. After a moment she leaned forward again with her elbows on the table, and her voice was low. "It isn't just that any more either," she said. "He's started on drugs now too—after you hit him and I got him to bed, I found a half empty bottle of something called chloral hydrate in his pocket. Tell me, Jim, do you know anything about that?"

I said: "Yes, I do. That stuff sends you to sleep. And it's bad."

The waitress came with my drink. I took the highball and ordered two New Yorks, rare. When she had gone, I took a long pull at my highball and I said: "What do you suppose is the reason he can't sleep?"

SHE WAS LOOKING VERY TROUBLED again, and she said: "But I told you earlier—it's my fault, and I acknowledge it, the way I was about Letty."

I finished my drink and put down the empty glass on the table in front of me and I said: "Don't you think perhaps it's the way he was about Letty?"

She looked at me straight and she said: "What do you mean by that?"

"You know what I mean. You know very well what I mean. I mean he was in love with Letty; that's what I mean."

Her eyes were sparkling now.

"What makes you think that?"

The waitress came back and said they were out of steaks, but they still had two roast beef. I looked at Janet. Her eyes were hard and she just nodded, so I ordered the beef and the waitress went away.

I said: "Hasn't it ever entered your head?"

"Of course it hasn't. I've already told you just how everything was. Begg never had a thought like that in his head. The trouble with you is you think too much. First I'm not in love with Begg, and then he was in love with Letty. Is there anything else you wish to tell me about my own family?"

The waitress came back with the beef and when she had gone I said, "I'm sorry, Janet, perhaps I shouldn't have said that. I truly don't want you to be upset."

"I'm not upset. Just you're making a fool of yourself, that's all. Begg was very fond of Letty, of course, and he knows how much I loved her, and that's why he feels

so badly about her, but I can assure you that's all there is to it."

I said: "Then I'm sorry I made such a stupid mistake."

I saw she was still put out, so I started to eat, and then she started to eat too, and we did not talk any more until we had finished. The juke-box was playing across the room, and when it stopped playing I went over and put in a quarter and pressed five buttons and came back and finished my coffee and got the check.

I said: "Perhaps we'd better get going and not lose more time than we can help."

SHE NODDED AND FINISHED her coffee and stubbed out her cigarette. When we were in the car again and we had started traveling and had left Mojave behind us for the long miles through the desert, she said: "I was thinking about the last time I saw Letty, remembering it all. To think it was only yesterday—all that has happened since! We had lunch together, and Begg was in Santa Barbara and I wanted to go to the beach and asked her to go with me, but she said no—she had a date at three o'clock; so I went with a friend instead. I was trying to remember how we said good-by; I was trying to remember what I said and what she said, but it was just quite casual of course, something like 'have a good time.' I know I was careful not to say anything much about the date, because once before, the night I was closing the living-room window and I heard her say good-night to him, and she came in and told us she was going to be married. When we asked her to tell us his name, she said no—she wouldn't tell us yet, not until she was quite sure."

I said: "I don't quite get that. If she wasn't sure, how could she get engaged?"

"Letty was very confused, the poor baby. She was very confused."

I said: "Did she say she wasn't sure in front of Begg, or just to you?"

Janet looked across at me. I could see out of the tail of my eye that she was looking across at me, but I kept my eyes on the highway ahead, because there was a string of headlights coming toward us, and one of them would not dim his lights down. I would flash with my dimmer at him, and then one of the others who was already dimmed would flash his brights back at me, and so it went on as Janet was answering me.

"What makes you ask that?" she said.

I passed the cars and turned my brights on again.

I said: "I'm sorry, I was concentrating. What were we saying?"

"You asked me if she told Begg she wasn't sure. As a matter of fact she didn't, she told me upstairs later. She just stopped by the living-room on her way up and said she was engaged, and when we asked his name, she said she would tell us when she introduced him, because she didn't want us to form any pictures of him in our minds before we met him. Later, upstairs, when we were alone together, I asked her again to tell me more about him, and she told me she wasn't quite sure yet, and so I said no more about it. What made you ask about that?"

"I don't know," I said. "Perhaps I was thinking that she would not want Begg to know his name so that he could not go and tell him about Letty and himself and mess things up that way."

Janet said: "Are you on that tack again? I've told you there wasn't anything between them."

"But you did say you knew she loved Begg."

"Begg didn't know that."

"That's right; I forgot." I shifted gears down to second to wait for a truck that was slowed right down. We were on a grade twisting among the red rocks and I could not see far enough ahead to pass him, so I had to wait my chance.

I said: "Sellick must have moved fast to get up to Mammoth when he did, if he was with Letty around three o'clock. He had no car, and busses take ten hours, at least."

Janet said: "What do you mean? Do you mean it was somebody else?"

"No, he could have done it. Probably there's an evening bus, and he was on that. I suppose it would always be possible to check—the driver or maybe some of the passengers would remember on a long drive like that."

"What are you trying to say? That it wasn't he who killed Letty?" She was all tensed up again, sitting up in her seat and trying to read my face by the light of the dashboard.

So I said: "It couldn't have been anybody else, you wouldn't think. No, I was just working things out in my own mind how he went about it all afterward, the bus and so on."

I passed the truck and got into the clear road ahead again and waited for her to speak.

She said: "But it *must* have been Sellick, because of everything. He must have got up there somehow, but that doesn't matter now." She did not sound too sure. But then she remembered something. "Of course, his voice. You'd forgotten that I shall be able to tell if it was his voice or not. And I'm sure it must have been."

I said: "That's right—you will, won't you?" I had the car back to its usual speed again now, and we were rolling the desert miles up steadily, but there was still going to be a long drive through the night hours. I said: "Why don't you curl up there or in the back seat and try to get some sleep. You'll be much more efficient that way when you arrive."

She said: "I believe I will, at that. I'll just curl up here. If I put my foot in your ribs, wake me up and I'll go in the back."

"You won't be in my way."

I leaned across her and pressed down the lock on her door so as not to take any chances. Then she curled up on the seat and put her beret on the arm-rest and put her head on it and went to sleep. I could not tell if she was asleep or not, but I presumed she was, since she did not talk any more as I drove along through the night. I could see the High Sierras now upon my left and the mountains looked very big in the desert moonlight.

AS I DROVE ON AND ON I thought how alike were the desert and the sea, and memories of flight returned to me, the sensations and the thoughts which had occupied me on those days in the Pacific, days and nights of sometime solitary flight over that great sea. Then, as now, I knew that there was an enemy ahead, standing between me and the memories of my future wife. Often in those days I had had memories of my future wife, as though the future were the past, in case there was to be no future. And traveling at high speed through those globes of sky, the future and the present and past would merge themselves so that they all were one, as in a dream, and it would be as easily possible to remember the future as the past, since both were always present. And I remembered quite clearly now, suddenly as though I had been struck by much electricity, that once I had remembered Janet's face. . . . Janet's face, Letitia's face—which was it, though; for they were both the same, and one was dead. Still I could not tell who was my enemy ahead, which of those two men had killed Letitia.

My thoughts were losing their coherence; yet I had a sensation of becoming more keyed up. Looking at the instruments on my dashboard, I saw that the gas was running low. Ahead I saw the neons of a service station, and I started to slow down. Beside me, Janet woke up.

She stirred a little on the seat at the change of rhythm of the car; and as I glanced at her, she looked up to see what was going on.

I said: "I'm stopping for gas. You can keep right on sleeping."

She yawned and stretched and sat up and said: "I'll get a little fresh air while we stop." She took out her comb and combed her hair and looked at her face in the mirror and sighed at it as we drew up.

I said: "It isn't as bad as all that, sleepy-head."

THE ATTENDANT CAME OUT of the station, and I got out and went to meet him out of earshot. He had sandy hair and freckles and a disarming smile, and he said: "Hullo, Major, you still at it, huh?"

I said: "I've an idea I'm going to follow your example any day now." I didn't resent it any more now; something had changed me in the past twenty-four hours so I didn't resent cracks about still being in any more. I said: "You know anything about the busses that run by here from L.A. to Mammoth, how many there are, and when they run?"

"Afraid I don't," he said. "They don't stop here. Wish they did. Shall I fill the tank?"

"Please. Where's the telephone?"

"Right there, on the right as you go in the inner door."

"Thanks."

I saw it would be out of sight of the car, and even if she got out, she would not come by there. I went in to the station and through and found the phone and got the long-distance operator.

"I want the Greyhound Bus Company in downtown Los Angeles."

"One moment, please."

I waited while she got to Los Angeles and found the number. While I was waiting I got out my change and laid it out ready to put in the machine.

"Greyhound Bus Company, one moment, please. That will be seventy cents for the first three minutes, sir."

I put in two quarters and two dimes.

"Go ahead please."

I said: "I want some information, please. I want the schedules of the busses leaving you for Mammoth Lakes, California, time of departure and arrival."

I waited. After awhile I got it.

"Bus for Mammoth departs 9:30 A.M., arrives Mammoth 7:30 P.M. The other two only run to Rock Creek, half-hour difference. Depart 2:30 P.M., arrive Rock Creek 12:01 midnight. The third bus leaves Los Angeles 7:45 P.M., arrives Rock Creek 5:15 A.M. Fare is $7.30 single and $12.45 return. Is that the information you required, sir?"

I wrote it all down as it was said.

I said: "Is there any way of checking whether a certain passenger was on one of your three busses yesterday? I mean if I gave you the name or description, could you tell me?"

"I'm afraid that would not be possible at this time of night, sir. If you care to leave the name and description, we might be able to do that—I just can't tell."

"Thank you, that's all, then."

I hung up the receiver and put the balance of the change back in my pocket and I thought that since Selick had been seen in the hotel in Chanley Heights at some time between nine-thirty and ten A.M., then he couldn't possibly have been on the morning bus. If, as I expected, he had gone on the 2:30 P.M. bus, then he could not have killed her, for she did not die at the earliest before three P.M., and more probably after that, in Chanley Heights, too. That meant that if he had arrived at Rock Creek at 12:01 midnight, he was innocent. The only bus he could possibly have taken if he had killed her was the one leaving Los Angeles at 7:45 P.M. and reaching Rock Creek at 5:15 A.M. If he had arrived at Rock Creek at 5:15 A.M. he could have done it, probably had done it, in fact. So now I had it. If he arrived at midnight he was innocent. If he arrived at 5:15 A.M., he was probably guilty. I reached the car and paid the boy for the gas. Janet was still away, so I got in and waited for her. I could see the boy was wanting to talk about the war with me while we waited for Janet, so I said: "How long will it take to get to Rock Creek from here? That's a little this side of Mammoth."

"In that car, let's see—Mammoth: If you really travel, you could make it around two hours and a half, I guess."

Janet came back, and I opened the door for her.

I said: "Thanks, that's about what I figured."

"Stop in on your way back."

"You bet." I swung the door closed as she got in, and we started off again.

Janet said: "That air has really waked me up; it's just wonderful. Who were you telephoning to?"

"Telephone? Oh, that—I was trying to get through to Mammoth to get reservations—but the line was busy."

"That line's always busy. It's a party line up there, and all the places around are on it."

"I thought you'd never been up there."

"I haven't; but when Begg was up there fishing last July and I was in New York, we had an arrangement that he call me long distance every evening at seven. Nearly every night we'd have to wait ages, and even when he did get through, there would be people always cutting in to see if the line was clear." She lit a cigarette and said: "We'd best try the Marmazon first; that's where he and Bill Burnette stayed. Begg's probably there now again."

I said: "I'd like a cigarette too, and then it's your turn to tell me some stories, now you're awake again."

She gave me a cigarette and said: "Stories—what kind of stories do you like?"

"Oh, about your childhood or something. Tell me about your Uncle Stephen. You've known him for years, haven't you? He's supposed to be quite a character."

"Uncle Stephen? He's not really our uncle, you know."

"Yes, you told me. He was a friend of your family's, wasn't he?"

"He and Dad knew each other from way back; they were at Harvard together and became friends there. It's funny, how different those two were; you'd never have thought they would be friends; they were just the opposite from each other, Dad was so gay and kind of irresponsible—I don't mean he was really irresponsible but he kind of put on an act of being it, rather like you in fact—" She broke off and looked at me quickly.

I SAID: "THANK YOU, Janet, I've been called it before, but never so nicely."

She laughed and said: "So it's true, is it?" She went on before I could answer: "Anyway, Dad was like that, and Uncle Stephen was always so serious and careful about everything, though maybe part of that was due to his carrying the torch for Mum; they both fell in love with her, you know. In fact Mum met Uncle Stephen first, and from little things Mum dropped, I've often thought she would have married him if she hadn't met Dad. Uncle Stephen knew he was a dead duck from then on and bowed out. But he was very sweet about it, and stayed friends with them both, though he didn't see us too often, he worked so hard. She fell silent a moment and then continued, "But he would always spend Christmas with us, and he was wonderful to Letty and me, he never forgot our birthday; and then, when Mum and Dad were killed, he took charge of us. He was as hurt as we were, I guess."

She fell silent again and I said: "How long ago was that?"

"Nineteen-forty-two—Dad went to London on the Air Board, and Mum went to be there for a while, and they got a direct hit on their house."

I thought: *And now Letty!* I just didn't know what to say, so I said nothing at all and I think she liked that. After a while she went on again: "I don't think Uncle

I fired a fraction of a second before he did.

Stephen has ever been the same since; he's changed quite a bit, got a lot older, sits longer over his meals, has more than one liqueur after lunch— in fact, especially since I got married and Letty decided to act, and we all moved away, he hardly seems to have very much to live for; he has his work, but he doesn't do too much of that any more now. Either Letty or Begg and I would try to visit him every week-end. We tried having him stay with us, but it didn't work out—he just isn't happy away from his own house."

"He must have been terribly upset about Letty."

"He was, very. He wanted to come right over, but he wasn't feeling well enough. I didn't know he was sick or I wouldn't have told him then. Begg said he was all right at lunch."

"What was the matter with him?"

"To tell the truth, I didn't ask. I was just thinking about Letty."

"How come you weren't lunching with him too?"

"Begg wanted to talk business, and I'd only just seen him anyway, so I went to the beach." She looked at me; I could feel her watching me from the corner. She said: "Are you trying to find out something?"

I said: "Hell, no, honey. I was just interested in you and your family, that's all. Can you see the name of this town we're coming to? I guess it's Lone Pine."

She looked out her side to watch for the sign as I slowed for the speed limit.

"That's right, it is."

"We won't be too long now. You've time for another nap if you want. I'm going to stop at Rock Creek to fill the tank, because I know what happens when you get up in the mountains, the price of gas goes up too, and Rock Creek's probably the last cheap place."

"Sure you wouldn't care for me to drive a bit?"

"No, thanks. I'm not much good at being driven."

She settled down in her corner again, curled on the seat. She said: "Maybe somebody will tame you one of these days."

"You never can tell."

She did not answer. She must have gone to sleep almost instantly.

Chapter Fourteen

WHEN I got to Rock Creek, it must have been around one o'clock in the morning. There was one man on duty at the station, and I pulled in there and got out to talk with him before Janet woke up. I had taken a lot of trouble in slowing down so that the rhythm would not change more than I could help, and she was still sleeping dead away when I stopped. She looked very cute with her hair all tumbled around. I closed the door very gently as I got out and the man came to meet me. He was around forty-five, bald as a coot too. He had keen responsible eyes, and he looked as though he had a good memory.

I said: "A friend of mine came up here by bus last night, and I can't find him without knowing which bus he was on, the twelve-one midnight or the five-fifteen in the morning. I wonder if you could help me."

He said: "Afraid I wasn't on duty last night at midnight. I was here for the five-fifteen though. What does he look like?"

"He's tall and thin and dark, with gray eyes. Age around thirty-two or -three. Serious-looking. He would have had fishing and camping equipment with him, because he was going to pack in at Mammoth."

His eyes got thoughtful.

"Fisherman? They was two-three fishermen, but I don't remember one looked like you say. And they stopped right here, anyway, they didn't go on to Mammoth. But could be I missed him; bus was pretty full. Shall I fill the tank?"

"Thanks. Would there be anyone around who was here for the midnight bus?"

"You couldn't talk with him now, Major. He'd just about cut your throat, or his wife would, if you tried waking him. In the morning he'll be here—comes on at noon, I think it is."

"Okay; thanks a lot."

"Sorry I couldn't help you any. That's three-seventy-five."

I got in and started up and drove off without waiting to check the oil and water. She was still asleep as I drove on up the mountain road. I didn't feel sleepy any more, not now I didn't. I was beginning to feel pretty certain Sellick had not been on the five-fifteen. I was beginning to feel pretty certain Sellick had been on the midnight. That made it Begg—unless I was crazy. But how?

HALFWAY UP THE HILL she stirred. The air probably did it. It was a good thing, anyway—gave her time to come to properly before we got in.

I said: "Hullo, there. We're almost in."

"Rock Creek?" she asked, her voice still crinkly with sleep.

"Mammoth. You didn't wake at Rock Creek."

"Oh."

She started to freshen herself up.

I said: "This Hotel Marmazon—what kind of a place is it?"

"I don't know. But you can bet it's one of the best, or Begg wouldn't have stayed there."

"I heard it wasn't too good. The man at Rock Creek told me it had gone off a lot lately. Why don't we try another place first?"

"If you don't mind, let's go to the Marmazon. I've an idea Begg will be there. And you want to see the Lieutenant, don't you?"

"Not specially. And anyway they may be gone by now. If they flew into Bishop early this evening, they may have gone right off in the mountains by now." I saw she was beginning to wonder, so I said: "Okay, we'll go to the Marmazon first."

I came on it sooner than I expected. It was a big log business with Marmazon spread in blue neon right across. It looked comfortable and modern.

I pulled in to the front porch and stopped my motor. Janet got out. I got out. We walked up the steps to the lobby together. The lobby was in half-light. There was no one at the desk. We walked up to the desk together, and I pressed the bell. A man came down the hall. As he came nearer, you could see he was around fifty; he had a nice expression on his face, considering he had been waked up. But as he got closer and looked at Janet, his expression changed into one of real pleasure and surprise, and this time you could see he really meant it.

He held out his hand to her and he said: "Well, hullo there, Mrs. Holbrook! How nice to see you again. Your husband never told me you were coming too; I expect he forgot to mention it. You've got the same room you had last July. He's there now, if you care to go right along?"

JANET WAS STARING at him. She was staring and staring at him, and now her face was dead white. It couldn't ever have got any whiter than it went then. And then she slid to the floor at our feet.

I bent down and picked her up and carried her to the davenport across the vestibule. The little man was looking very puzzled.

I said: "It's the mountain air. We came up too fast. Got any brandy?"

"Brandy? I guess so, I'll see." He went off, still puzzled, and brought a bottle and a spoon from the next room. I poured some brandy in the spoon and held it to her lips and trickled it into her mouth. The little man said: "I'll go and tell her husband."

I said: "Not now. I'll see him later."

"But she's sick—he should be here."

She was beginning to stir; the color was beginning to come back to her cheeks. The little man was making to go down the hallway to get Begg Holbrook. I left her for a moment and caught up with him and stopped him with my hand on his sleeve. I said: "Look, I don't want him brought here now, or told she is here."

He looked at me and he looked at her, and back again at me, and he said: "I can't believe it—there was one couple that were happy together if ever there was one." He shrugged and his eyes went listless and bitter and indifferent, and he said: "After that, I give up. They were the happiest couple I ever saw."

Janet's eyes were open now and she heard what he said. I could see she had heard what he said.

She said: "I think I'd like to go to my room, if you've got one vacant. I won't disturb my husband tonight."

The little man shrugged and went to the desk. I signed for the rooms and got the keys, and he showed us where the rooms were. They were down the other end of the hallway from Holbrook's. All the time I had been thinking that he might come out and see us, but he didn't; he was evidently fast asleep. I didn't want Janet and him to meet while she was like this. You could see she was still in a state of shock.

I got her suitcase from the car and took it to her room. When I got back, she was lying on the bed staring up at the ceiling, so still you would have thought she was asleep if it had not been for her eyes being wide open. She did not speak or say anything or move when I came back. I shut the door and went and sat on a little chair by the bed and took her hand. It was ice-cold. I got up and took off her shoes and got the blankets from the foot of the bed and put them over her and tucked them in around her and turned out the top light and left the little light burning on the side-table. She did not move or say anything. I sat down again beside her and waited. I was beginning to wonder if she realized that I was there or not when her head turned toward me, and I saw her eyes were full of tears; and when she spoke, her voice sounded very far away and foreign to her.

"Letty," she said. "How could she have done that to me!"

I said: "Provocation. In other words, Begg took advantage of the situation."

She was still staring in front of her.

"Those pictures," she said. "No wonder she was upset by those pictures."

I said: "I'm going to leave you to sleep now. Do you think you can sleep?"

It wasn't any use. She did not even hear me. She was still thinking about her sister's betrayal of her, not her husband but her sister's. She lay there staring, staring. All at once she half sat up, and brushed the hair from her face.

"Now I see. Now I see! How right you were about them! If it hadn't been for me, she wouldn't have died. She wouldn't have got in trouble. It should have been her and Begg, instead of me and Begg."

I said: "Stop that, Janet. It's no use talking like that, it's wrong even to think like that. Life isn't an if; life's life. What happens happens, and to heck with it! Who do you think you are, to carry on like that? You're just one small person out of two thousand million people on this globe, and most of the others are starving and ill and in pain. Now you're darn' well going to sleep and shut up. I'm going to stay right here beside you until you go to sleep."

The light from the side-table caught her hair; it was a soft pale orange light, and it caught her hair and it caught the contours of her face, and it shone also on her throat. She was still wearing her wool shirt open at the neck without any scarf or necklace or any form of adornment, and the small circle of orange light from the tilted lampshade framed her head and neck in its color, so that she looked like a stained-glass madonna.

She said: "No wonder Begg wants to kill him! And if he doesn't kill him, I'll do it myself."

I stared at her.

I said: "What makes you think Begg wants to kill him?"

"Because he was in love with Letty. I see it now. That's why he wanted to come on ahead of me; that's why he looked the way he did, that funny tight look that comes over his face sometimes—" She broke off suddenly as a thought came to her mind. She said slowly, "That funny tight look—" She raised her hand to her mouth and looked at me and through me, and she said: "I can't take it, half those times, half those times he was with me, he was thinking about her, wishing I was her. I must go to him at once. I must make sure for myself. I must look in his eyes and see it—"

She was starting to get up; her voice was increasing in its note of hysteria.

I slapped her face.

SHE STAYED QUITE STILL for a moment, looking at me in astonishment. Then she began to cry. I said: "I'm sorry, Janet, I had to do it."

Her eyes were sparking behind her tears.

"The hell you did! You let me up at once. I'm going to see Begg right this minute."

I said: "Listen, Janet. There's something more you've got to understand: I don't believe Sellick was on the evening bus. I think he left town before Letty died. I think she turned him down the evening before. I think the afternoon date she had was with someone else. I didn't want you to know about this yet, but you're forcing me to tell you."

"What do you mean?" She stared at me. "What do you mean?"

"I'm morally certain Begg killed Letty."

She stared and stared.

Then she said: "You really are crazy, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not—he was insanely jealous of her marrying Sellick."

Janet sat up. She was not crying any longer now; she had not troubled to wipe the tears from her cheeks; the line of her lips and her chin was firm and taut and determined.

"She wasn't going to marry Sellick, you fool! And Begg was in Santa Barbara anyway. I've had enough of your romantic nonsense for one evening. Get out of my way."

I put my hands on her arms, holding each arm just below the elbow.

"Begg didn't know she decided against Sellick. I was watching his face when it came up about her intending to turn him down. He was badly shaken."

"But he was with Uncle Stephen. Uncle Stephen wouldn't lie about a thing like that."

"Perhaps Begg found some way of slipping back without his knowing. That's what I want to telephone and find out about. Please, Janet, will you stay here while I do that? Then, if I'm wrong, you can see Begg. But if I'm right, can't you see how dangerous it is for you to see him?"

BUT SHE WOULD NOT LISTEN. She would not listen at all. She said: "I'm going to see Begg, and you can't stop me."

I twisted her around and got both her arms behind her back while she kicked and threshed about on the bed. I got both her arms together and got hold of them in my left as she began to shout, and I quickly got out my handkerchief with my right hand and stuffed it in her mouth and stifled the scream before it had started. I looked around for something to tie the gag in with. Her suitcase was lying half open by my feet, and I kicked it over so that the clothes came out and spilled all over the floor, skirts, blouses, underclothes, and what I was looking for, two pairs of silk stockings. I got one of the stockings close to me on the floor by dragging at it with my foot. Then I let go the gag for a second with my right hand and bent down and got the stocking before she knew what I was doing. The gag was still firm in her mouth. I twisted the stocking around it as best I could with one hand and around her head, and tied it with my right hand and with my teeth. Then I took off my belt and tied it around her arms tight and then around the rail of the bed and buckled it firm. I tied her ankles with another stocking. I left her lying like that on the bed and went out. Her gaze followed me out, her eyes sparking blue fire.

I slipped out of the room and made my way to the desk and found the telephone booth over against the wall. The little man heard me from his cubbyhole place and came shuffling out and looked at me.

"Oh, it's you," he said.

I said: "Yes, it's me. The Inspector Lieutenant who came with Mr. Holbrook—which room's he in? It's urgent."

Now I had got him all puzzled again. You could see he couldn't figure how Janet and I could have known that her husband was here. He gave it up.

He said: "He's in the room next door."

"Show me. I've got to talk with him."

"You can't right now. He's out."

"Where's he gone?"

"Mammoth Pack Station, he said. He said he'd be back later. He's been gone a long time now."

"Did Mr. Holbrook go too?"

"No, he's asleep in his room."

"Okay, thanks."

I made my way to the telephone booth and picked up the receiver and gave a long ring and listened for the operator. After about thirty seconds she came on the wire.

"I want Long Distance, please, operator."

"One moment please."

I waited. I heard a click on the line.

"Long Distance. Number please."

"I wish to speak with Mr. Stephen Farnum of Santa Barbara, California."

"I'm afraid I can't hear you very well. Can you speak a little louder, please?"

"I want Mr. Stephen Farnum of Santa Barbara, California."

"Stephen Farnum, Santa Barbara. Who is calling please?"

"Mr. Holbrook."

"Thank you. What is your number, please?"

"Marmazon."

"Thank you. One moment, please."

A man's voice said: "What's the idea, Foraker?"

"Ives, is that you?"

"Yes. What are you doing?"

"Are you at the Pack Station?"

"Yes."

"I've been wanting to get in touch with you. Did you find out what time Sellick got to the Pack Station?"

"He packed in at three in the morning."

"Then he didn't do it, Ives. He must have come on the midnight bus which leaves downtown before she was killed."

"I know it. He did come on it. I've just been checking. Why are you calling Farnum?"

"To find out why he's giving Holbrook an alibi. If it wasn't Sellick it must have been Holbrook."

"Correct. I've found out some things too. You're doing quite well, Major, but I wish you'd check with me before acting on your own as you're doing now."

"Shall I cancel the call?"

"It was never put through. I called Farnum just this moment myself. I made him really talk."

"You did? What happened?"

"Holbrook was there, all right. Farnum and he tried some new South American liqueur Holbrook had brought him. It must have contained dope, because they both passed out cold from one-thirty to five-thirty, when Farnum came to and revived Holbrook. The old man's still feeling plenty ashamed of himself."

"Ives, I've got it."

"What?"

"That was chloral hydrate, not wood alcohol."

"Chloral hydrate?"

"Holbrook's wife found a used bottle of it in his pocket that evening. He must have slipped Farnum a mickey, got his Cadillac, made it in to Chanley Heights and back, then given himself a mild dose of the stuff so he was out when Farnum came to. He knew Farnum wouldn't talk about it. And he darn' near got away with the alibi."

"That's it, then. Listen, I'll be right back. Is he still asleep?"

"Yes."

"See he doesn't slip out before I get back. He's liable to be after Sellick as soon as the fog lifts on the Crystal trail."

"I'll watch him."

IVES HUNG UP. I put the receiver down and went out into the hallway to get the gun from the glove compartment of the car. The little man wasn't in sight, so he must have gone back to his cubbyhole. I went by the corridor that led to Janet's room, and there was some light streaming out into the corridor, cutting across it from one of the rooms where somebody had left their door open with the room lights on.

I went down the corridor. It was Janet's room all right. The room was empty. And her shoes, which I had taken off and put down by the foot of the bed, were gone.

I raced for Begg Holbrook's room on the other side of the hotel. Number Five. I had seen it in the register when I was signing. Number Five. The numbers went fifteen, thirteen, eleven, nine, seven, five. The door was closed. I turned the handle, as quickly and as quietly as I could. The door swung open. The room was in darkness. I clicked on the light and there was nobody there. Nobody at all. The bed had been slept in and the covers were left all anyhow. There was a holdall and a suitcase lying open with some of his clothes lying around, city clothes that he had traveled up in, probably. And also lying on the floor was an empty newly opened box of rifle shells, thirty-thirty, steel jacket, the kind you use for deer hunting.

The little man was standing in the doorway.

He said: "What do you think you're doing?"

I took him by the arms, and it was all that I could do not to shake him. I said:

"Quick—what happened to Mrs. Holbrook? Did she meet him?"

He looked at me.

I said: "Look, this is serious, a police matter. There's a killing involved. And if you don't talk fast, there may be another, there may be two more, in fact."

He said slowly: "Well, you seem genuine enough. Maybe I better tell you. Mr. Holbrook left while you were in the phone booth. Had a Springfield with him, said he was going deer hunting to Crystal. Just after he left, she came by to see him. She asked me where he'd gone, and I told her. I guess she followed him; I told her which way the trail was, but I don't know if either one of them can git along it yet. If the fog's lifted, they can; if not they'll have to wait awhile."

"Thanks. You got a rifle?"

"Well, I—"

"Quick, man, where is it?"

He looked at me.

"Okay," he said. "I'll get it for you."

He went down the hall, shuffling along in the way he did, and I thought he would never get there the pace he went. Halfway along he started shaking his head.

"I dunno why I should be doing this," he said. "I don't at all know why I should be doing this." He looked up at me, pondering. "How'm I to know you are on the level about all this? Maybe I better wait till the inspector gits back."

I said: "I can well understand your outlook. If I were in your boots, I would feel the same myself. It's up to you to decide. I can't force you. But there's one thing you've forgotten."

"What's that, Mister?"

"Why do you think the Inspector is here at all if it isn't a police matter?"

He thought about that for a while, and then he gave his little shrug. He said: "I guess so." Then he started off again down the hall. He turned in at his cubbyhole place and went through into a bed-sitting-room and I followed him in. There was a rack on the wall, and there was a Mannlicher on the rack. He reached up and got it down and handed it to me. I broke it and saw it was unloaded, and saw the barrel was clean. He was getting some shells from a box in his table drawer. He held out a handful.

"These be plenty?" he asked.

I took the shells and looked them over. They were all right, Peters high speed, .30-30.

I said: "That'll be fine, thanks."

I loaded the rifle and put the remaining shells in my pocket.

"Which way is the Crystal trail?"

He led me out the side door and pointed up the hill.

"Follow this track around the bend in the lake. About a quarter-mile beyond the bend it forks, and one is marked to Crystal, the lefthand one. As you get up the mountain it forks again, and again it's marked and you take the left. You can't miss it, unless there's a fog but there doesn't look to be one right now, far as one can tell from here what it's liable to be higher up. And I'll tell the Inspector soon as he comes in."

"Thanks. You do that."

I hit the trail. I thought for a moment of going to get the revolver from the car, but then I thought I would not use the extra time, so I hit the trail instead. I wanted to catch up with Janet before she could catch up with Begg. I thought I had a good chance, because I figured that Begg would be making plenty of time in order to get to Sellick before Ives could sight him.

Begg would be traveling as fast as he could, probably faster than Janet could travel. But I didn't care to underestimate Janet. She had not taken long to get out of my tie-up. You couldn't stop a girl like that Janet.

I hurried on as fast as I could. The moon had long gone. It was cold, and it was going to get colder the higher we went, and the nearer the hour came to the Californian false dawn. I thought of Janet in just that wool shirt and jacket, and then I started to laugh at myself for worrying about a girl catching cold when she might be catching a bullet in her heart.

I came to a fork in the trail, and it was unmarked. The little man had not mentioned it. The first one he had mentioned was a quarter of a mile beyond the bend in the lake, and I had only just reached the bend in the lake. The little man had forgotten to mention this fork at all. I wondered if he had also forgotten to mention it to Janet or to Begg. I took the left-hand one and hoped for the best.

Suddenly I realized a possibility. I realized that if either Begg or Janet had taken the left-hand trail, and if also the left-hand trail, which I was now on, merely ran down to the lake, then either Begg or Janet or both of them would have to turn and come back, and in doing so, might meet each other, or just one of them might meet me. I tightened the grip on my rifle, holding it ready to raise to my shoulder in a flash, and hurried down the trail as fast as I could.

I met nobody at all on the ever-darkening trail, darkening because the big trees were crowding in thicker here than they had been farther back; and then, suddenly, I saw an expanse of whiteness ahead of me through the gaps in the trees, and I saw the lake, and I saw that the trail ran into a clearing on the edge of the lake. The clearing was empty. . . . I had to go all the way back to the fork again, cursing the little man under my breath. He had cost me a good twenty minutes. He might have cost a life.

I came to the marked fork, the first one, and took the left trail as the little man had described. This time it started really to climb. Now you really began to feel the effect of the altitude, the thin air and shortening of breath unaccustomed to it. There was no longer any question of speed. The question was how far up one could climb without stopping for breath.

By the time I reached the second fork a long time had passed, and I was a great deal higher up. Already I could begin to see a faint glimmering of light in the eastern portion of the sky, and the line of the mountain across the valley was discernible. The air was now at its coldest, fraught with the advent of new snow.

The trail leveled off considerably after the second fork, in places even going downhill slightly, then climbing again farther on. I was beginning to be able to tell the contours of my immediate vicinity now, and I could see that the trail was skirting a high cliff which might well be the southern shelter of Crystal Lake. It looked as though the trail were only waiting for a suitable pass in order to penetrate the cliff since I was now traveling laterally instead of forward as before.

About an hour later I was proved right. The trail turned sharply, following a fold in the cliff wall and mounting steeply over the pass. At the top the elevation must have been very great; it was the highest point that I had reached in the whole journey, and now the real dawn was beginning to be visible—the dawn on the high mountains.

I looked down, ahead of me; and there, still in the shadows of the departing night, Crystal Lake lay in its mountain basin. It was not a large lake, but it was certainly very beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful lake that I had ever seen.

And then I saw the fisherman.

Chapter Fifteen

HE was standing at the head of the lake, rubber-clad, in the water up to his thighs, and even as I first caught sight of him, he was making a cast. Although he was perhaps some four to five hundred yards distant from me, and some two hundred feet below, so that I was unable to recognize his features, yet I could tell by the way in which he moved and by the shape of that familiar figure, that it was George Sellick. I looked carefully around the lake to see any other figures which might be visible, and then I saw also the figure of a woman wearing slacks and a mountain jacket moving along the trail some halfway along the side of the lake, her hair bouncing up and down as she half ran and half walked along the trail. Yet nowhere could I see Begg Holbrook, nor any other person.

I ran forward down the hill, searching with my eyes as I ran, and still I could not see him. I could see the camp now, with two animals tethered beside the small lone tent, there on the other side of the lake. And then, even as I was running forward, I heard the sound of a rifle-shot.

At once I looked at Sellick to see if he had been hit. I saw the splash of the bullet in the water some three to four feet from him, and I saw him turn to look in the direction whence the shot had come. I heard him shout, and his words came clearly to me over the surface of the water.

"What the devil do you think you're shooting at, you fool?"

There was no answer, but now I could see him; I could see Begg Holbrook lying there on the bank beside a boulder, and he was taking deliberate aim at his human target some two hundred yards from him. I knew he was bound to score a hit within his next couple of shots, perhaps within his next shot.

I had my rifle at the ready, and even as I raised it to my shoulder, I took the first pressure on the trigger, throwing myself forward onto the ground all in one motion.

I got him in my sights and fired a fraction of a second before he fired his second shot at Sellick. I saw my bullet spatter up the dirt a good six feet from him, high and to the left.

I looked at Sellick. At first I thought that this time he had been hit. He dropped his fishing-rod and was now crouching down in the water. Then I saw what he was doing. He had his left arm crooked before him, and he was drawing a revolver with his right and resting it on his left arm as he aimed for a fantastic shot. He was out of efficient revolver range, and all that he could hope to do was to put Holbrook off his aim.

My own shot had already partly succeeded in doing that. For a moment Begg Holbrook turned his head to see who was shooting at him. Meanwhile I was taking aim for my second shot, and Janet was there, halfway between us, almost in my line of fire.

Sellick fired and missed. I was afraid for one moment that his spending revolver bullet might hit Janet, but she was still running forward. Just before she reached my own line of fire, I drew a deep breath and steadied myself as I have never steadied myself before. I squeezed the trigger, fired.

Begg Holbrook jerked upward and fell back, dropping his rifle from his hands as he fell back. This time I had not missed. And even as I was getting to my feet, I saw that Janet had reached him and then knelt down beside him. I had only just fired in time.

I heard running footsteps behind me and looked up. There was Ives. How he had made it in the time that he did, I shall never know; but there he was, breathing heavily, almost in a state of collapse, but there present and on the job.

He said: "That was pretty fancy shooting, Foraker. But I'm afraid you're not going to get the credit for it. Give me that gun."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm getting the credit for that shot, not you. It's in my line of duty, and not in yours, so we'll hear no more about it."

I shrugged and gave him the gun. I looked to see what the others were doing. Sellick was coming out of the lake, on his way to walk around the bank and find out what had been going on. Janet was still kneeling beside Begg Holbrook, who was lying very still. I wondered if he was dead or merely wounded.

We ran forward, Ives and I, Ives carrying the rifle. Janet looked up and saw us as we came toward them. She was looking as though she might collapse at any moment, kneeling there with her arms about her husband.

When I looked at Begg Holbrook, I saw at once that he was dead. I think he must just have died in that instant in her arms.

Ives said: "I'm sorry it had to be this way, Mrs. Holbrook, but I found out that he, that he—"

Janet finished the sentence for him.

"I know," she said. "He just told me before he died."

Then she pitched forward on her face. I jumped to her and took her in my arms. She had fainted dead away.

Ives said: "Look after her while I go on and meet him."

I nodded, and he went off to meet Sellick, but I didn't pay any attention to him, I was too busy trying to see what I could do for her. I took off my flight jacket and put it around her. Her hands were like ice, and this time I had no brandy or anything. I began rubbing her hands and her feet; her feet were badly bruised, and her shoes were in a bad state; they had not been made for the kind of wear they had just been receiving. The sunlight was beginning to reach down over the hill to the lake now, and I knew that shortly she would be in the sunlight.

When Ives and Sellick came, she was still out. I looked up at George Sellick. He still looked very much the same as he used to in the olden days, except that now he was older. He gave me a wan smile and said: "Hullo, Foraker, Ives has been telling me."

I smiled at him and said: "Hullo, George. Have you any brandy?"

He was looking down at Janet's face, and I saw the little tensing of his facial muscles as he looked at her. He took a flask from the deep pocket of his fishing-coat and handed it to me and said, still looking at Janet's face: "I would never have believed it, I would never have believed it. Letty had told me about her, of course, but—"

He gave a little shrug as he handed me the flask and looked at me, and then he said: "I think I'll leave this with you. Let's call it a farewell offering, shall we? I don't think I want to be here when she—"

I TOOK THE BRANDY FLASK from him and I said: "I understand."

He said: "Maybe I should never have asked you for that necklace. I think perhaps every man has to use his own necklace." He held out his hand and I took it. He said: "So long, Foraker, I've got a lot of fishing to do."

I said: "So long, George."

He turned on his heel and walked back along the bank of the lake, back along the way he had come.

I opened the brandy flask and poured out a little of the brandy into the top of the flask and tipped it gently against her lips as she lay there with her head in my arms. I knew that soon now, at any moment, perhaps at the same moment as the sunlight reached us, she would open her eyes and look at me and come alive again.

THE END

Who's Who *in this* Issue

Captain Michael A. Musmanno, USNR

HE was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he maintains residence; was a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature for two terms; was elected Judge of County Court, and then Judge of Court of Common Pleas, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Has been on military leave from Court of Common Pleas since December 1942.

Captain Musmanno is a graduate of George Washington University, and also holds degrees from Georgetown University, the National University, the American University and the University of Rome.

He served in World War I as infantryman; in World War II as Lieutenant Commander, Commander, and now Captain, United States Navy. He served throughout the entire Italian Campaign from Salerno to Brenner Pass with Fifth Army in capacity of naval liaison officer with combat troops, military government officer and naval aide to General Mark W. Clark. He was attached to United States Forces in Austria following Armistice, continuing as naval aide to General Mark W. Clark, and serving also as President of United States-Soviet Forcible Repatriation Commission. He is at present a judge on the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg.

Captain Musmanno has been awarded the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star for Valor, the Purple Heart (twice), the Army Commendation Ribbon, the Marine Good Conduct Ribbon, Navy Expert Pistol Shot, Italian Silver Medal of War and Italian Air Force Combat Observer Badge.

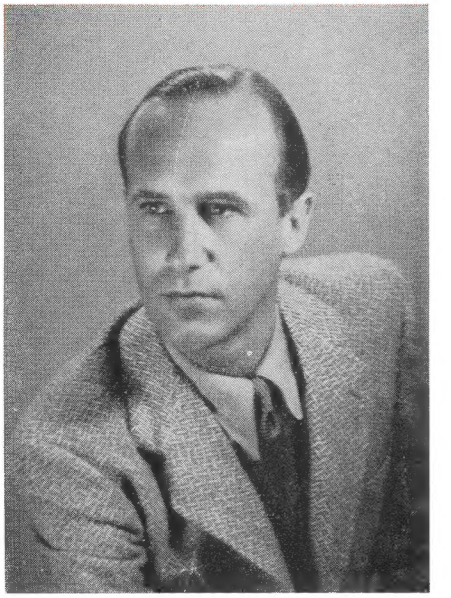
Besides many magazine contributions Captain Musmanno has written a number of books—"After Twelve Years," "Does Man Live Again?" (Co-author with Clarence Darrow), "Listen to the River," "Proposed Amendments to Constitution" (a work of research accepted and published by United States Congress as national document); "Black Fury" (Co-author. Story made into movie by Warner Brothers, starring Paul Muni); "The Man and the Soldier" (Biography of General Mark W Clark), and "The War in Italy."

Crawford Sullivan

ONE summer, while walking along San Francisco's waterfront, Crawford Sullivan wandered onto Pier 59 and persuaded a ship's captain to hire him as a wiper. It was on this first trip that he met Ramon, a Spanish-type stowaway, who was the inspiration for "Wacky Like a Wolf." An ambiguous individual with no evident purpose in life except to have a wonderful time, Ramon disappeared the moment the ship hit New York, leaving Sullivan minus a pair of shorts and a new shirt.

After a few trips at sea, Sullivan decided to resume his education, so he went back to college. Jobs were scarce when he graduated from Stanford University, and he took a chance at submitting a radio script to a sponsor who was looking for a new writer. The script went over, and he wrote radio shows and advertising copy for the next few years, later branching out into magazine fiction.

He took a trip to the South Seas shortly before the war, then did technical work for the Army and Navy, and is now back at fiction-writing again.



Gordon McDonell

Gordon McDonell

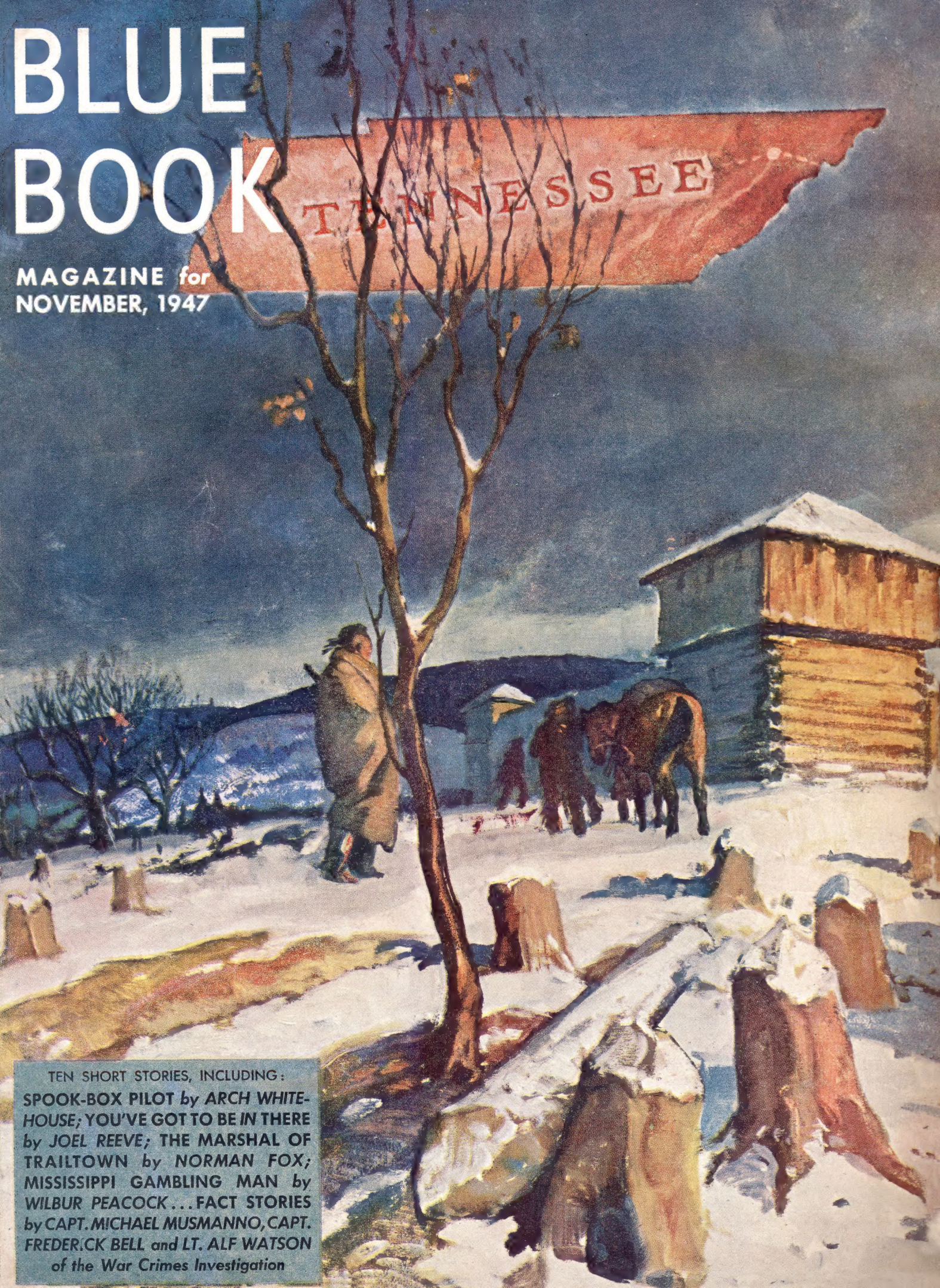
GORDON McDONELL was born in Scotland some forty-odd years ago. He served in the British Indian Army as a captain, played on its polo team, and later settled down in France. He came to this country ten years ago, and after a year or two in Arizona, settled in Hollywood, where he now lives.

He is the author of the original story on which Alfred Hitchcock's "Shadow of a Doubt" is based, and wrote a novel, "They Won't Believe Me," the basis of the RKO picture of the same title, a short version of which was published in *Cosmopolitan.* "My Sister, Good-night" will be published in book form by Atlantic Monthly Press early in 1948; it was bought by Franchot Tone for a motion picture, and McDonell is now writing the screen play for this movie.

McDonell has published two other novels in England, and is still at work on a long contemporary novel laid in British India before the partition, a book which Atlantic Monthly Press will publish, and which he has been writing for the past seven years. He has also written several original movie stories, and has contributed to British magazines. "My Sister, Good-night," is his second publication in an American magazine.

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE for
NOVEMBER, 1947



TEN SHORT STORIES, INCLUDING:

SPOOK-BOX PILOT *by ARCH WHITEHOUSE;* **YOU'VE GOT TO BE *IN* THERE** *by JOEL REEVE;* **THE MARSHAL OF TRAILTOWN** *by NORMAN FOX;* **MISSISSIPPI GAMBLING MAN** *by WILBUR PEACOCK* . . . **FACT STORIES** *by CAPT. MICHAEL MUSMANNO, CAPT. FREDERICK BELL and LT. ALF WATSON of the War Crimes Investigation*